

THE
SCATTERGOOD FAMILY
BY
ALBERT SMITHE.

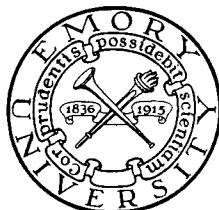


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THE
FORTUNES
OF THE
SCATTERGOOD FAMILY.

BY
ALBERT SMITH,
AUTHOR OF "THE ADVENTURES OF MR. LEDBURY"
ETC.

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THE
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CHAPTER I.

THE WAGGON.

ABOUT four miles to the south of a line drawn from Canvey Island to Romford, running almost parallel to the flat marshy lands which border the river portion of the Essex coast, there is a low, dismal piece of country, intersected by dykes and narrow tracks, but little known even to those living within a short distance of its confines: for, assuredly, beyond some coasting traffic, there is not much to tempt any one to explore it, either from curiosity, or a love of rural scenery. Nor would its solitude offer any charms to the anchorite. A hermit, however greatly he might admire his condition, would find it but a sorry region wherein to pitch his dwelling, unless he built his cell upon piles, and kept a small boat by the side of his couch, to be used upon emergencies. For the Thames, which is a great leveller in its way, and, like most levellers, generally not very particular in its notions of appropriation or acknowledgment — but, addicted to repudiation as it

were, when it finds itself in a state of low water, after running upon its own banks — is apt to take possession of the different wretched cabins in the district upon a very short notice ; producing various geographical transformations on the surface of the country. And these phenomena, although very interesting to the learned men who study the moon and her influence, on the heights of Greenwich, are not considered as remarkably diverting by the inhabitants of these uninviting regions.

The greater part of the swampy moors which lie on each side of the road for some miles, is covered with bunches of rushes and rank grass ; whilst the ground is everywhere moist and plashy, where it does not actually sink into small hollows filled with slimy and stagnant water. Long, melancholy rows of pollard willows mark the courses of the various dykes and bourns running and intercrossing each other in all directions ; and here and there the roadway is obstructed by a gate or swing-bar, the use of which, beyond occasional obstruction, is unknown, since there is no one to receive toll ; nor do the few half-starved animals who graze about the waste appear desirous of straying to any of its distant pastures. The only living things that appear to thrive and fatten in this fenny region are the frogs ; and, when day goes down, they croak out their self-satisfaction at keeping their heads above water, in such numbers, and with such earnest vehemence, that their concert travels far and wide upon the wind, and the “marsh-bells,” as their song is termed by the natives of the adjoining places, may be heard upon still evenings at an incredible distance.

It was a sharp winter's night, in the beginning of January. Every pool and watercourse of the morass was frozen over ; the rushes at their edges were powdered with frost as well ; and the cart-tracks of the road were covered with a thin coat of ice, which shattered down by the least touch with a glasslike and hollow sound into the dry ruts beneath, to the great delight of the boys who loitered along the road collecting stray cattle, and thus procured all the excitement of breaking windows, without the unpleasantness of attending punishment. It was cold, bitter cold. The

wind came frozen as it swept in biting gusts over the fettered marsh, or whistled amongst the slender branches of the pollards ; and the very stars appeared shivering as they twinkled with wintry brightness in the clear blue sky. But, in the intervals of the wind's wrath, all was dead and still ; as if Nature, being locked up in the icy trammels of the frost until the sun chose to bail her out, was aware that at present she could not well help herself, and so maintained a dignified and impressive silence.

About eight o'clock on the cold evening in question, a tilted waggon, with two horses, was traversing one of the roads above spoken of, in the direction of London. It was not going very fast, for the driver, almost benumbed, had got down from his seat, and was walking by the side of the horses, as he went through the series of violent gymnastics with the arms and legs, popularly supposed to generate caloric ; with an accompanying forcible expiration, somewhat resembling the subdued noise of a locomotive engine, to which his steaming breath formed a not inapt adjunct, as it was visible with that of the horses in the gleam of the lantern which hung in front of his vehicle.

There were two passengers under the tilt of the waggon. One of them, to judge from his rustic dress of corduroy and velveteen, was apparently a countryman ; and he wore a small round hat, which, with his costume generally, gave him the air of being something between an ostler and a railway navigator. And there was a look of mingled cunning and simplicity in his face, that rendered it somewhat difficult to determine from the ascendancy of which attribute he might be classed as the greater knave or fool. The other was a tall, well-formed young man, of four-and-twenty, or thereabouts, partly in the attire of a sailor. His features were regular and handsome, in spite of the general air of dissipation which pervaded them, and the wandering and unsettled expression of his eyes. A profusion of dark curling hair shaded his expansive forehead, which every now and then contracted into a frown as he assumed the look of deep thought : but this soon passed away, and his countenance became as careless as before.

The travellers had cleared some of the vegetables and packages away that were immediately round them, and having drawn the canvas of the tilt closely together on every side, except where the lantern hung in front, that it might give part of its light to the interior, were stretched upon some straw, smoking in company. A foreign-looking bottle was placed between them, to which they occasionally applied their lips, and then again relapsed into the contemplation of the thin volume of smoke which curled upwards from their pipes, and filled the waggon with its fumes.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the countryman, after a long pause, coughing as he spoke, "I shall be stifled if we don't get a go of fresh air. I expect you won't mind it neither, young man?"

"Deuce a bit:" replied the other: "it's all the same to me what I breathe, short of brimstone. Have it open, if you like."

"How's us going on, Tom?" continued the first speaker, as he pushed the tarpaulin on one side, and addressed the waggoner.

"Oh! right enough," was the reply; "you haven't got a drop of the brandy to spare, I reckon, have you?"

"What's the use of asking, if you think so? catch hold!" answered the passenger, handing him the bottle down.

The driver took a draught at the flask, which did not appear likely to come to a termination, if a violent fit of coughing had not interrupted him.

"Ah! that'll do," he said, as soon as he could speak; "we shall get on now. Hark! there's a clock going eight; that must be Romford."

"That's not Romford, I'm sure!" exclaimed the young man, as the sound of some distant bell came over the moor.

"Do you know this part of the world, then, master?" asked the countryman.

"No — yes — a little. That is, I did once," returned his companion, with a half-melancholy voice.

The waggoner approached his vehicle, and beckoning to the countryman, they communed together in a low voice for about a minute. When this was finished, the latter drew down the tarpaulin, and they once more enclosed themselves in the interior.

"I hope, as we overtook you, and gave you a cast, you'll keep all dark if you see anything on the journey, pardner," said the rustic.

"Oh! I'm safe enough," replied the other, laughing. "I don't know where I should have wandered to if you had not come by, so I owe you something."

"Did you come from Rochford?"

"No; I got a boat to drop me on the coast. I don't want to be seen in the large places. Perhaps I should have to stay there longer than I liked. I believe the Goodwin Sands was the last port I touched at, the night before last. There are no debts to be paid there, though, except Nature's."

"Good!" said the other, with an approving nod, as he poked his finger into the bowl of his pipe. And then, after a short pause, he added, "May I make bold to ask your name? — mine's Bolt, though some calls me Cricket, because they hear of my being about, but can never lay hold of me."

This voluntary confidence appeared worthy of a return, and the young man replied,

"Well, you may call me Vincent, if you like. That name will do as well as any other."

"Then I think, Mr. Vinson, you'd best shut your eyes for a minute or two, if you don't want 'em shocked."

The waggon stopped whilst he was speaking, and Bolt got out, taking the lantern down with him. They were close to a watercourse that ran underneath the road by a brick arch. The driver, guided by some apparently unimportant sign, drew an iron bar from under the waggon, similar to those used for fixing hurdles in the ground, and proceeded to break the ice with it. This done, he drew out three or four small casks, of about two gallons each, which he handed to his associate, who immediately put them into the cart, and then climbing in after them, stowed

them away at the far end, covering them with a quantity of turnips, which formed part of the load. And then he resumed his place in the interior, and the waggon once more went on, as if nothing had occurred—the whole transaction scarcely occupying two minutes.

“That’s how we get spirits from garden-stuff,” observed Mr. Bolt, upon taking his pipe again; “and that’s our private cellar. A tub bust once, and the frogs got drunk with brandy-and-water. He! he! I never see such a go!”

This occurrence, whether it ever happened, or was merely called up to divert his fellow-traveller, excited Mr. Bolt’s risibility to a great degree, only checked by what he termed a thimbleful of brandy, which, from its quantity, was rightly named, as it would certainly have assisted to sew up anybody else, whose head was less spirit-proof, if repeated often. And then, discovering that his pipe was exhausted, after several ineffectual attempts to arrange himself in an easy position, he gave two or three preparatory yawns, and was soon asleep; whilst his fellow-traveller was not long in following his example, albeit the springs of the waggon had not been contrived with the greatest view to luxurious travelling. The driver, too, whose exercise had sufficiently warmed him, assumed a sort of rope-dancer’s position upon one of the shafts; and, beguiling the journey with a song without an end, which he set to an extempore melody, pursued his journey towards the metropolis.

CHAP. II.

THE MARKET BREAKFAST HOUSE.

It was past midnight before the passengers in the waggon woke up from their sleep; and then, as they looked out of the front, they found by the lights and buildings on either

side of the road, that they were approaching London. The driver appeared to have fallen in with a friend, who was now walking with him at the side of the horses; and Bolt, after a few words of salutation, and two or three enigmatical inquiries, turned his conversation to his companion.

"What are you thinking of doing, or where are you going in town, master?" he inquired.

"I wish I could tell you," returned Vincent, to give the speaker his own name. "I expect there is little for me to do in London."

"There's a good deal for everybody," added Bolt, "only they don't know how to set about it. I've been in business in London fifteen year, and so I ought to know."

"I thought you were a countryman," observed his companion. "You have a Yorkshire accent."

"Like enough — like enough," replied Bolt. "I was born at Sheffield, and goes there now and then for goods, when my stock is out."

"And what line of business are you in?" asked Vincent.

"Oh, the general; but more especially in dodges, according to the state of the pewter. When that's flush, I sell Birmingham spoons and cheap ironmongery in a tilted cart round about London, on Saturday nights, and catch old birds with chaff. If the funds isn't up, I decide celebrated wagers between great sporting characters, and get rid of fifty gold wedding-rings before six o'clock, at the corner of the Quadrant; and when it's quite low water, I mounts a pair of high-starched gills, and an uncommon clean apron, and comes the very respectable mechanic, as know'd better days."

"And you find that last pay?"

"Oh! out and out, if it's under a gas-lamp in front of a public. People is sure to have change either going in or coming out; and when they gets a little how-is-you-by-this-time, as the saying is, it makes them feel for a fellow-creature in distress. That's the time for congreves to go off."

The waggon kept on through Mile End, and long straggling Whitechapel, in which there was now little stirring.

The lights over the gin-shops were extinguished, and all their shutters closed, except in the immediate neighbourhood of the cab-stands. And here none of the drivers were at their posts, but had taken refuge from the cold in the taproom of the nearest night-house ; or had converted their own cabs into private sleeping-rooms. The waterman was the only token of humanity that appeared, as he stumped about amongst his tubs, and the wretched vehicles and animals under his protection, in a fashionable wrapper, formed from a sack with three holes cut in it, through which he put his head and arms, and a pair of hayband gaiters, with a covering of the same fabric on his head, which looked something between a beehive and a chimney-pot. Even the houseless professors of lithographic mendicancy, who drew from Nature upon stone, and braved the cold in a wonderful manner during the day, as they depicted mackerel on the pavement in gay-coloured pigments, accompanied by flourishing statements of their being reduced to the last extremity, over which they assumed the position of the dying gladiator, until literally ordered by the authorities to walk their chalks by shuffling them out, — even these found the sharp night air too much for their stoicism, and slunk and burrowed into hidden corners of outhouses and unfinished buildings, where, herding together like animals, they attended the next day of incertitude, as to the means by which the crust should be procured, in shivering and darkness.

At last, after a slow progress through the city, for the horses were weary with their lengthened journey, the wagon arrived at Covent Garden market. Here all was life and movement ; one of the divisions of restless London that never slept. A light snow was falling, which twinkled by the gas-lamps as it descended upon the heavily-laden carts of vegetables surrounding the quadrangle, awaiting the daybreak to be unladen—a process which at one or two points was already going on. Within the market several of the people had built up rough tents of baskets and tarpaulin, beneath which they sought to catch an hour or two of dozing before their labours commenced, upon a bed of

dry fern, over a mattress of vegetables. Here and there charcoal-fires were burning, which threw a red and not unpicturesque light over the various groups, as the wind swept keenly through the avenues, and blew their embers into transient brightness; and at these spots a cheap breakfast was being doled out to waggoners and porters, who huddled round the stall. Occasionally a burst of revelry from some of the last frequenters of the night-taverns in the neighbourhood, as they made their exit therefrom, echoed along the piazzas; and now and then angry words passed between these belated convivialists and the owners of the vegetables, respecting the right of possession to various bunches of esculent roots which the former light-hearted individuals wished to appropriate unto themselves, and render applicable to the performance of various diverting pastimes. But these differences of opinion usually commenced with challenges to ordeal by battle, and terminated in the nearest gin-shop; wherein the provokers of the disagreement proved that they were real gentlemen, not at all proud, and of noble and forgiving natures.

As the waggon stopped, the man who had walked with the driver for the latter part of the journey, brought a small covered truck to its side, and receiving the tubs which they had taken in upon the road, soon disappeared. The vegetables were soon shot out behind, in a very unceremonious manner, upon the ground; it was evident they formed the least important portion of the load. And then Bolt approached his fellow-traveller, who had descended, and was leaning against one of the pillars, and inquired where he thought of going.

"You could have a bed in the waggon," he added; "but we must be on the move again, as soon as the horses are all right. I don't know exactly where to send you."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about me, my good friend," said the other, in a good-tempered tone. "I know London well enough. I have a home in it somewhere, only I don't exactly know how I should be received if I were to go there. Besides, this is rather an unholy hour to ring up your governor when he don't expect you."

"The 'luminated clock says a quarter to three," observed Bolt. "It don't get warmer, neither," he continued, stamping his feet upon the ground. "Phew! I'm almost sorry I ain't little enough to get inside the gas-lamps; it do look comfortable there, don't it?"

"I wish I could offer you something for the lift you've given me," said Vincent; "but I'm about as hard up as anybody can well be; and, what is worse, I don't know very well at present how I am to look for much more. I can only give you my thanks."

"Don't put yourself out now about that," said Bolt; "all we asks is, keep dark, as I said, about the journey. And if you get regularly stumped, and ain't particular what you turns your hand to, you'll hear of me there: only you needn't say so."

He put a dirty card of some public-house at Rotherhithe into his companion's hand as he spoke; and then wishing him good-night, he took one of the horses, which the waggoner had unharnessed during this brief conversation whilst his fellow took the other, and they disappeared round one of the corners of the market.

Vincent Scattergood — for such was the name of the individual whom we have presented to the reader, — remained for some little time after his late companions had departed in a state of blank incertitude as to his destination for the night. There were hotels, it is true, in every direction; and bright lights in the entrances, albeit the shutters were closed, proved that all the inmates had not yet retired. But his purse was at present exceedingly slender, and they were beyond his means. Nor did there appear to be an available nook in the market unoccupied, except the more exposed portions, on which a tolerably thick layer of snow had now settled, turning the heaps of vegetables, as seen through the different porticos, into cosmoramic representations of Mont Blanc. Had there been, Vincent would have availed himself of it; for he was not over-particular.

After a quarter of an hour's rumination, chewing the cud of the plans he had been previously forming, he took

his bundle, and having strolled vaguely up and down the piazza two or three times, turned into a house of public entertainment, the doors of which were invitingly on the swing, and its business apparently in full play. It was an early breakfast-house, frequented by the market-people ; or rather a very late one, for its chief trade commenced at midnight, and continued until commerce and animation were once more in full vigour.

There was a long apartment divided into boxes, each containing a narrow table, which nobody could sit close to, but required the telescopic arms of a polypus to reach what was on it after the most approved style of tables in tea-gardens and coffee-houses generally. And on these tables, which were void of cloth, were dogs'-eared periodicals, transparent from the frequent contact of adipose toast, or ornamented with arabesque rings of evaporated coffee, produced by careless guests, who turned the weekly unstamped journals of Modern Athens, and the small-priced repertory of the information-spreading committee into temporary d'Oyleys. Neither were traces of the embryo chick, in its earliest stage of gestation, absent. In some of these boxes, customers were discussing market topics ; in others, cups of dark and unknown beverages, presumed by clever analytical chemists to be infusions of parched peas, sweetened with treacle. And in others, again, a few individuals were indulging in a heavy slumber, pillowing their heads upon the pewter salt-cellars, or black tin waiters, as they awaited the opening of the market, or the advent of another day of homeless want and misery.

A love of exclusiveness pervades all grades of life, however widely separated their degrees in the scale of society. The aristocrat adopts it to show his sense of the true security of his position, which enables him to act as he pleases ; the would-be patrician, in the dread of losing the finely-poised station that he has attained, which may be turned by the slightest breath ; and the radical, who prates aloud in forced images, — the verbal fulcrum, as he believes, upon which the world shall be moved by the lever of public opinion, — and rates the pride of those

alone above him, whose sphere he cannot reach, shrinks equally from the touch of his inferiors, and believes that in himself alone is centred the general level of society, to which the higher classes must succumb, whilst those below him ought to elevate themselves to his standard.

And this spirit was ministered to in the market coffee-house. For at the end of the long room there was another of smaller dimensions, with a fire and tables, for those who were willing, by the most trifling extra outlay, to command the additional attention which their increased respectability called for. Into this division of the establishment Vincent entered; more, however, from the boxes in the lower room being occupied, than any exclusive feeling of his own; and, taking his seat by the fire, ordered some coffee.

There were only three other persons in the apartment. At the extreme end a woman was relating an uninteresting and interminable story, in a hoarse bronchial voice, to her male companion, and before the fire was a man enveloped in a faded cloak, which was wrapped closely about him, his head alone appearing above the French, or dirty, grey collar, which looked like the skin of an unclean white rabbit that had had all its hair curled. He took little notice of Vincent as he entered, but continued apparently looking very hard at nothing upon the mantel-piece. His hair and whiskers, which might have been imitation chinchilli for aught anybody could have told to the contrary, betrayed no knowledge of comb or brush; and his boots, which were the only other tokens of his toilet that appeared, were of the curtailed fashion, as appeared from the ridge which they threw up at the heel and instep, under his tightly-strapped trowsers.

But, although to vulgar eyes he gazed at vacuity, yet was the brain of this really great man all the time in full activity. For his imagination had filled the mantel-piece with living mobs and characters. Bandits clutched in desperate struggles to its marble edge; British seamen bore defenceless females along the patterns of the paper; and unexpected heroes appeared from crinks and crannies in the wall, to the great confusion of the rest. Every volute of smoke, as it vanished up the chimney, was, to him,

peopled with sylphs and demons ; ships were foundering on the coals : persecuted servant-maids escaping over the hobs, and scenes of varied and surpassing effect forming in the embers. And in the glowing light abstruse French words, unintelligible as the writing on the wall, perpetually appeared to perplex his gaze, and lead the mind into fresh labyrinths of confusion. His brain was now throbbing to invent some new situation, which the minor theatres would produce for its intensity, and placard on the hoards and walls of great thoroughfares, in startling cartoons on the succeeding Sunday. For he was a dramatic author.

Vincent Scattergood finished his very modest repast, and drawing his chair round from the table, placed it before the fire, as he clapped his hands together in its warmth. The sound startled the dramatist from his visions ; but it was a noise pleasing to his ears, and his heart opened to the gratuitous applause with which his last mental effort had been greeted.

" It's a very cold night, sir," he observed, as he got up a little corresponding applause, similar to that subdued expression of approbation which he was accustomed to institute in obscure parts of the theatre,—suburbs of the pit and recesses of dark boxes—on the first nights of his productions. " It's a very cold night, sir."

It was a grand truth, which there was no denying, and Vincent acquiesced in its justice.

" From the sea, sir, I presume," continued the author, as he looked at Vincent's semi-nautical costume.

" I have been knocked about aboard ship for a few months," replied Vincent. " I landed yesterday—or rather the day before, for the time is getting on."

" Ah ! indeed," returned the other : " you have seen the Flying Dutchman without doubt."

" Indeed I have not," said young Scattergood. " But I believe I am the only person who has been to sea that that never did."

" Immense effect ; that vessel, that looked as if it was going to run down the house. You could not—excuse

me, though, if I give you my card. Possibly my name is not unknown to you."

And so saying, he drew a solitary card from his pocket, and gave it to Vincent, who read the address, "Mr. Glen-alvon Fogg, Dramatic Author, Cheshire Cheese, Vinegar Yard."

"I do not reside at the Cheshire Cheese myself," observed Mr. Fogg; "a house of call for playwrights, sir. The drama is on the decline, and author and under-car-penter now move in the same groove—so to speak—of the theatre. My object in taking the liberty of addressing you was, as a nautical man, to ask your advice. You have doubtless seen the shark of the Atlantic?"

"I have only cruised about the German Ocean," said Vincent: "they once tried to point out the kraken to me, off Norway."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Fogg. "I wished to ask if you knew of any good situation that you thought might suit."

"I wish I did, for my own sake," replied Vincent. "I should only be too glad to take it. I do not know yet where I am to hide my head to-night; it is a case of hard-up."

Mr. Fogg perceived that his meaning was not precisely understood. He gazed at the fire again for some minutes, with his brains enveloped in a wrapper of mighty thought, and then observed,

"I believe we can mutually accommodate each other, sir; I am at present engaged on a nautical piece, of intense interest; but never having been to sea, I have some little doubt about the propriety of my language. Taking a reef out of your keel, or hoisting your anchor hard a-port, are difficult things to manage, although we can shiver timbers and belay, or avast-heaving, with safety."

"I suppose you want me to direct you, then?" said Vincent, smiling at his new friend's remarks

"Precisely so; and, in return, I can offer you for a night or two such accommodation as my lowly roof affords; board I must leave to yourself."

"Well, it's a bargain," said Vincent. "To be frank with you, I have come back sooner than I ought, and do not care much to show my face at home—at least, at present. I will see of what use I can be—at all events, for a couple of days."

The small reckoning on either part was paid; and Mr. Fogg, who had been awaiting the visit of some rustic lessee, with money for the performance of his pieces, according to appointment, but who never came, left the coffee-shop with his new companion.

The true cosmopolite is less suspicious of an acquaintance formed in this manner, thought Mr. Fogg, "than the man of limited mind. Besides, I have nothing to lose but my ideas."

And, piloting the other through one or two narrow and ill-conditioned streets, the dramatic author at last stopped before the open portal of the crazy tenement, at the very summit of which the apartment which he termed his lowly one was situated.

CHAP. III.

THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY OF THE CHICKSANDS.

MORNING broke in freezing brightness upon the expanse of Kennington Road. Omnibuses densely packed with the city-bound colonists of Brixton and Clapham, swayed their unwieldy bulks along the snowy thoroughfare, leaving imitation railroads on the ground behind them; and their conductors returned provoking shakes of the head to the hail of belated pedestrians, who saw not that they were full, by reason of the tangible breath that crystallized on their windows. Boys forsook the footpaths, and selected' perilous gutters at the side to progress on; or stored up compressed ammunition in ambush for the Tooting carrier. Congealed cabmen threw sackcloth over their shoulders, and careful housekeepers strewed ashes before their doors: whilst apprentice butchers, with glowing faces, and hands

as red as the juicy meats they carried, performed quiet dances upon the door-steps, until their signal was answered ; and then stayed not for converse with the ruddy handmaidens who replied to their summons, but hurriedly bolted off, whistling half-frozen melodies, and making feudal and uninvited incursions upon the adjacent sliding-grounds of junior lads. The sun himself looked cold as he threw his canopy of wintry light over the dome of Bedlam : many-armed direction-lamps caught up his rays, together with the newly-rubbed brasswork of surrounding cabs ; but the beams were flung back with a chaste, subdued light from the zinc plate that marked the residence of "CHICKSAND, COAL AND WINE MERCHANT."

Had Mr. Chicksand lived in a country town, his neighbours would possibly have expended much of their time, and powers of conjecture, in endeavours to discover whereabouts the extensive commodities that formed Mr. Chicksand's merchandise were stored. For the house, which was of moderate dimensions, being of two windows in breadth, with a balcony on the first-floor, which looked somewhat as if a large drawing-room fender had fixed itself there when the house had been turned out of window in some remote convulsion, possessed but limited accommodations for pipes and chaldrons. So that most probably the coals and wine were in the barges and docks on the river, and Mr. Chicksand's regular departure from his private residence at half-past eight each morning, was to go and look after them, or assist in the disposal of many tons and dozens. And, besides, had he wished to have kept his coals even in his upper apartments, he could not have done so, for they were usually occupied by separate families of those social victims, called lodgers, upon whom, without exactly being cannibals, the Chicksands lived. And when a new tenant arrived, the Chicksands fattened on him, and made festivity ; although at other times they, figuratively, picked up the rice, grain by grain, like the ghou of the Eastern story.

Mr. Chicksand had departed upon his commercial enterprises ; and his helpmate, having picked out four eligible

pieces of coal from the scuttle, and placed them carefully on the fire, in such a position that they should not consume their substance in too great luxury, descended to the kitchen. And here her first care was to remove some cinders from the range, and screw the iron cheeks nearer together, until they somewhat resembled her own, and brought the fire to a column of embers, instead of a body ; all which was the more remarkable, considering her husband was himself a coal-merchant, and, in the eyes of the world, had mountains of Hetton's and countless tons of Lambton's at his own disposal. This done, Mrs. Chicksand called to the maid, who was polishing her face and a fender with black lead in an adjoining cavern.

"Lisbeth !" cried the mistress ; "Lisbeth ! what are you at ?"

"Cleaning Mr. Bodle's fender, 'm," was the answer.

Mr. Bodle was a professor of music, the whispered editor of the Weekly Pitchpipe, and lived in the back parlour.

"Then let Mr. Bodle clean his fender himself, and come in here. We can't look after any Bodles now. What's he want his fender cleaned to-day for, I should like to know ?"

"He's going to lend his room to Mr. Snarry to-night, 'm, for the ladies to put their cloaks in."

"Umph !" said Mrs. Chicksand, in a tone of mollified dissatisfaction, "it's a pity somebody don't lend Mr. Bodle a little money in return, and perhaps he would settle for the last fortnight. I suppose Mr. Snarry has asked him, then, to meet his friends."

"I think he has," replied Lisbeth ; "leastwise, he revived his coat last night with some anticardamums and a toothbrush. I see him doing it through the ventilator."

And the domestic assistant tittered at the reminiscence ; whilst Mrs. Chicksand walked about the kitchen upon a tour of inspection, peeping into all the vegetable dishes, and lifting up all the inverted basins on the dresser, which appeared to have been set as traps for catching brass thimbles, cap-edgings, and tangled skeins of thread.

"How's the bread this morning, Lisbeth?" asked the mistress.

"Not much, mum," answered the maid. "Mr. Snarry had in a twopenny brick last night, and Mr. Bodle borrowed it when he came home late, because the shops was shut."

"Mr. Bodle's a vampire," affirmed Mrs. Chicksand forcibly.

"Lor! is he now, mum?" inquired Lisbeth. "I shouldn't wonder. He never paid oack half the cottage that Mr. Snarry lent him, a Friday, when his household was all gone."

"We should all starve, for what we get from him, a screwy, pinchy —— There s the postman," added Mrs. Chicksand, at a tangent.

And, as Lisbeth went up stairs to answer the door, Mrs. Chicksand finished her review by noticing the contents of the safe, which was something between a large lantern and a birdcage, and hung in the back kitchen, above high-beetle mark.

Mr. Snarry, who resided on the second floor, was a clerk in the Drawing Office at the Bank, and lived in Kennington Road for economy and exercise,—the latter being no small point with him, as in his proportions he inclined to the chubby. Taking advantage of the first floor being vacant, he had determined to celebrate his natal day by giving a party to certain other clerks, and Mr. Bodle was invited to join them, for the triple reason that he sometimes gave Mr. Snarry concert tickets, that he sang a good song whenever he was asked, and that the use of Mr. Bodle's back-parlour would be an imposing addition to the rooms already thrown open, whilst nobody would ever imagine that the imitation rosewood chiffonier was a turn-up bedstead. To commence the preparations for the festivity did Mrs. Chicksand descend to the kitchen, and with a willing heart; for a turkey had arrived from the country, where the house of Snarry located; and the gentleman himself—a real gentleman Mr. Snarry was—never locked up his things. In the will, this was a fine trait; in the

deed, it would have come to just the same whether he did or did not; for, knowing the annoyance of forcing doors when keys were lost, Mrs. Chicksand had provided two for every lock in the house, as well as caused holes to be chiseled in all the cupboards and what-nots, to impugn the honesty of the mice, upon emergencies, with some little show of plausibility.

"Two notes for Mr. Bodle, wrote all over with 'Gone away,' and 'Try No. 2,' and one for you mum," said Lisbeth, entering.

"That man must have changed his lodgings very often," mused Mrs. Chicksand. "I can't understand it."

"Mr. Snarry says he's in love, and follers the young lady about like anything; and that that's her next door as sings through the wall," observed Lisbeth.

"Never mind what Mr. Snarry says; wash up the breakfast things," interrupted her mistress, breaking open her letter, and continuing, as she first read the signature, of course,

"Well, if it isn't from the Scattergoods at Bolong, that lived by us when Mr. Chicksand was unfortunate as a grocer in Essex! I wonder what they can possibly want with me!"

The wonder was soon dispelled by simply reading the epistle, in which Mrs. Scattergood wished to know if Mrs. Chicksand could accommodate her husband, son, and daughter, on their arrival from Boulogne, until they had time to look about them.

"Dear me!" observed the lady, as she twisted the letter various ways. They've put where they live at Bolong, but no date, and they say they shall leave 'to-morrow.' I wonder when that is."

"Thursday, mum," said the servant.

"Ish! nonsense! you don't know what I mean," replied Mrs. Chicksand. "What can we do? They were nice people, the Scattergoods were, but lived over their means. Where can we put them?"

However, Mrs. Chicksand soon contrived the accommodation. The back kitchen was to be fitted up as an

extempore sleeping apartment for her husband and herself ; and Lisbeth was to repose in some of those mysterious *penetralia* wherein lodging-house servants usually sleep ; portions of the dwelling whose precise situation has never been correctly ascertained, and in all probability never will be ; the popular opinion being divided between the bins of the empty cellars, or the unoccupied shelves of the pantry.

"If they come to-day, Mr. Snarry must put off his party," observed the servant, as she hung the cups on tenter-hooks. "Won't he be wild, too, that's all, after giving three-and-sixpence, as ever was, for two pound of spermycitties for the room. My !"

"Well, we must take the chances, Lisbeth," said Mrs. Chicksand ; "if they must come, they must."

And then the mistress of the house proceeded to give directions, and make arrangements for the festivities of the evening.

CHAP. IV.

MR. SNARRY'S MAIDEN ENTERTAINMENT.

WHEN a bachelor gives a party to his male friends, he has only to provide interminable boxes of cigars, consecutive kettles of hot water, and ordinary bottles of distilled drinks, to amuse his guests in a first-rate manner ; and with a card table borrowed from the man in chambers underneath, a barrel of oysters, and one spoon between three, the *r union* is safe to go off admirably. But when he expects lady visitors, it is an undertaking of much greater importance ; their more delicate organization requiring equally refined appointments, from a looking-glass and pincushion in the back parlour unrobing room, upon their arrival, to the female attendant, who must not go to bed until all the bonnets have been properly distributed, upon their departure. And to young ladies there is a wild recklessness in

coming to a single man's house, that often leads them to look for some extra-ordinary amusement ; and this excitement reacting upon itself, requires all the energies of the host to prevent the extreme of expectation running into the depth of disappointment.

Mr. Snarry was aware of this. He had rashly begged his Benedict fellow-clerks to bring their wives, and eke their sisters, that the Bank might resound with his praises, as one of its most dashing constituents ; and telling them that they must take everything in the rough, he directly commenced toiling to render the entertainment *recherché* beyond imagination. For this did he buy for eightpence two bronzed casts from a child of sunny Genoa, of ladies holding sockets in one hand, and resting wheels without spokes upon their legs with the other ; and in these sockets were implanted wax-ends, albeit they cracked in the operation. For this did he trim the lamp, whose name of "solar" suggested to classic minds the "*lucus a non lucendo*" beyond anything else, and only resembled the sun in its eclipse and total disappearance, as night advanced ; for this did he dispossess the staircase bracket of the unknown bust, and place the light thereon. For this did he paralyze, with an unwonted order, the pastrycook at the corner of the street, who had hitherto regarded patties and blanc-mange as flighty conceptions of romantic confectioners ; and on this account alone did he hire a six-octave square piano, at half-a-guinea, that Mr. Bodle might thereat shake his locks, and conjure with the keys, producing the gay quadrille from its freshly-attuned interior.

The governors of the Bank of England, although in ordinary cases men of keen perception and cool judgment, were that day convinced that Mr. Snarry had the influenza : for he left early, under plea of being indisposed (which in reality he was—to stay any longer), and devoted the afternoon to rehearsing his properties and effects at home. His friend, Mr. Bam, who perplexed palpabilities whenever he got them, at Clement's Inn, where the nutritive potato sent up its steam of incense to the mighty pillars ; the grand entrance that conducted to the modest chambers, like the

imposing outside of a juggling show, attracting crowds to be deceived within ; Mr. Bam — whose bill in youth's young morning he had once put his name to—had lent him his boy to wait ; and relieve Lisbeth of her manifold duties. So that altogether Mr. Snarry calculated upon an effect ; as well as making immature clerks believe that he inhabited many rooms, and kept a plurality of attendants.

Mr. Chicksand returned at five, and at the request of his partner bought a pair of white Berlin gloves ; not to join the company, but to look like a butler, that he might receive one or two shillings when the guests departed, which Mrs. Chicksand affirmed there was no occasion to throw away upon the dab-boy. And at a quarter past seven the Clapham omnibus put down the first guest, Mr. Pratt, who trod on a slide, and tumbled down as he got off the step, thereby breaking his brace, which Mr. Bodle kindly mended with a piece of harp-string ; and they were thus engaged when the " second party " arrived, which included two or three of the fair sex, followed by a very ancient clerk indeed — a senior one, at a hundred a-year, in pumps, spectacles, and gloves, so long that they doubled over the ends of his fingers. And then all the ladies sat in a row on one side of the fire-place, and all the gentlemen stood about on the other, not speaking much, and only in a whisper ; to divert which solemnity, and give an appearance of bustle and vivacity to the proceedings until it was time to have up the tea, Mr. Snarry poked the fire, ran in and out of the room upon imaginary missions, and opened and shut drawers and chiffoniers, nervously looking after things which he knew were not there, for very distraction.

When the tea arrived, Mrs. Hankins, the wife of one of the company, was requested to superintend its distribution, which gave rise to many pleasant sallies of utterance of sly things ; Mr. Bam sitting upon Mrs. Hankins's left, and putting the sugar into the cups with infinite drollery. Mr. Pratt, too, came out of the corner where he had remained ever since he came into the room, and practically proved what had been often told him at the Bank, upon the mere perception of his companions, that he was an advantageous

acquisition to hand the muffins about at a limited tea-party.

"That's right," said Mr. Snarry, rubbing his hands, and infusing a little lively dreariness into the party; "that's right, ladies; this is Liberty Hall, you know. Don't mind Pratt; he's quite harmless."

Mr. Pratt blushed, and the ladies tittered slightly, whilst the ancient clerk looked pleasant over his spectacles, and paid great attention to what everybody said, often leading the company to think he was about making a bright remark, and then disappointing them by saying nothing. In the midst of one of these pauses the iron gate at the end of the garden was heard to slam, and then a human imitation of a mail-cart horn was sounded from below, followed by one enormous solitary bang of the knocker.

"There's Jollit, for a guinea!" cried Mr. Snarry. "Come, now we shall do. I hope he will be rich to-night."

The wish, whatever it meant, was certainly a kind one, and uttered in all sincerity. For Mr. Joseph Jollit was the wag of the Drawing Office, the "funny man" of every party he was asked to, and unequalled either in his graphic lyrical descriptions, or sawing off the leg of the rosewood chair.

Mr. Jollit first caused himself to be announced by Mr. Bam's footboy as the Duke of Northumberland, and then in a most diverting manner, walked on up stairs to the second-floor; from whence, being recalled, he opened the door a little way, and putting his cloak and hat on the top of his umbrella, after the manner of the practical joke in the story-books, touching the African who deceived the lion into going over a precipice, he hoisted it up behind; concluding that funny trick by pitching it clean over the door amongst the guests, which drew a slight cry of terror from some of the ladies, who imagined that this was Mr. Jollit's usual method of entering a drawing-room, he being a species of clown of private life. When the excitement of his real entrance had somewhat subsided, he got behind Mr. Bodle, and having pinched him in the calf, yelped like a dog, at

which Mr. Bodle get exceedingly indignant ; until Mr. Joe Jollit gave him a dig in the ribs with his thumb, put his tongue in his cheek, and told him it was all right.

A round game was now proposed ; and as soon as Lisbeth had removed the tea-things, and with the subterraneous assistance of Mrs. Chicksand, washed the spoons against supper, Mr. Snarry got out the cards and counters, the latter of which were a gross of button-moulds on a string, and caused a little joyousness. And this was increased for a time into something really like a laugh, when Mr. Joe Jollit turned one or two of them into teetotums, by cutting splinters of wood from underneath the table with his pen-knife, which he pushed through the hole in the middle, and set them twirling. They made a very large party for *vingt-un*, the funny gentleman sitting between Mrs. Hankins and her sister, and saying “that he was a rose between two thorns,—he meant a thorn between two roses.”

And then he dealt in eccentric fashions, and made jokes about the first knave, and hid aces under the candlestick ; and put other people’s fish in his pocket, with other jocularities too numerous to mention. As the card-table drew off a great many people, Mr. Snarry was greatly comforted at all this display of talent, and felt less nervous about entertaining them. But he found, after all, that giving a party was not the glorious treat which he had anticipated it to be.

When the game left off, at which, by some means or another, everybody had lost a shilling, the time came for Mr. Bodle to amuse the company by playing and singing whilst supper was laid. And this was all very well ; for the musical professor was becoming indignant that he had not been asked before. After a convulsive symphony, he commenced a ballad of his own composing, singing it very loud, that the young lady who lodged next door, whose migrations he followed with hopeless affection, might hear it ; whilst the lady portion of the company listened with great admiration, and Mr. Joe Jollit imitated a violoncello performer, by sitting the wrong way upon his chair, and playing upon the back with the tongs, at which Mrs. Han-

kins's sister hid her face in her handkerchief with laughter, he was such a droll creature — she never did !

Two or three ladies, with their hair dressed in the most prevalent style of suburban scarecrows, who had remained singularly unoccupied all the evening, were now led forward to supper by Mr. Pratt and the ancient clerk. Mr. Bodle played the "Roast Beef of Old England," which was thought very appropriate ; and Mr. Joe Jollit drew down great mirth, by giving estimates of the prices of everything on the table, asking Mr. Snarry what time to-morrow he intended to dine off the fragments, and drinking by mistake out of Mrs. Hankins's sister's glass. Then he called Bam's footboy "Lorenzo Augustus," and christened Lisbeth Clotilda, and told Mr. Snarry not to be fussy ; for if there were not enough clean plates, they could turn what they had upside down. What a real blessing was Jollit to persons about to give a party !

After supper Mr. Snarry informed the guests that he had prevailed upon Mr. Joe Jollit to dance his hornpipe blind-fold amongst six oyster-patties, the fire-shovel, and hearth-brush, disposed in a cunning manner upon the floor. There only remained from the supper four patties and two cheese-cakes, which the talented gentleman was arranging to his satisfaction, when a great knock at the door diverted his attention.

"That's my brother Tom," said Mr. Jollit. "He said he would come late, because he has been to another party."

"He will take some supper," said Mr. Snarry.

"No, no,—never mind," replied Jollit ; "he can have that pastry when I have finished with it. Now see me receive him."

Lisbeth was re-collecting clean tumblers in the kitchen, so Mr. Bam's footboy answered the knock. Mr. Jollit first walked round the room with pantomimic mystery ; and, having taken up one of the squabs from the sofa, which he poised on the half-opened door, next armed himself with the other, and stood opposite to it.

There was a moment of breathless interest, as footsteps

were heard on the stairs. They approached, and the door was opened by Mr. Bam's boy. The first cushion directly fell down upon his head, and, before an instant could elapse, Mr. Joe Jollit hurled the second with herculean power at the visitor who followed him. The gentleman reeled back, and appeared to stumble. There was the scream of a female in distress, followed by a smash of glass so tremendous, that it could be compared to nothing but a shower of tumblers falling through the roof of the Coliseum conservatory; and then Mr. Snarry, and as many of his friends as it could accommodate, rushed wildly out upon the landing-place.

Half-way down the flight was a stout gentleman in a travelling-cap and cloak, grasping the balusters with one hand, and clutching a carpet-bag with the other, as he gazed in speechless astonishment at the throng above. At the bottom reposed the fatal cushion and Lisbeth, amidst the ruins of the tray of glasses she was carrying up for the mixed beverages. And close to her were two females, also in travelling costumes, the younger one a pale, but very handsome, girl of eighteen, clinging to the other in extreme terror; whilst a violent draft ascended from the open street-door, through which a little boy was assisting a hackney-coach driver to bring in all sorts of packages and bundles from the vehicle.

Mrs. Chicksand and her husband flew up from the kitchen, where they had been discussing every dish of Mr. Snarry's supper as it came down, upon the first alarm; and in an instant the truth broke upon them. After a terribly rough voyage of thirteen hours, the family of the Scattergoods had in reality arrived from Boulogne, and driven immediately to Mr. Chicksand's for something like a quiet night's rest, to compensate them for their harassing journey. Mr. Bam's footboy, forewarned of nothing to the contrary, imagined that they were a portion of the company, and directly ushered them up stairs; and Mr. Joe Jollit's funny conceits had led to this remarkable reception.

There was, of course, a violent uproar, in which all the

gentlemen joined, except the ancient clerk and Mr. Pratt, who retired in great fright to the end of the room. Some were very angry, others could not help looking upon it as a practical joke. But the young girl, who still kept close to her mother, after exclaiming, "How different is this to our own home!" burst into tears.

CHAP. V.

VINCENT SCATTERGOOD MEETS WITH AN ENGAGEMENT.

THE house from whose humblest attic issued forth those harrowing incidents of domestic tragedy and nautical adventure with which Mr. Glenalvon Fogg, dramatic author, startled the Monday night galleries, and appalled the pits of minor theatres, was situated in a blind court leading out of Drury Lane. You would not have found your way thither unless you had been shown, for the entrance was like the long private approach to an exclusive dust-bin, widening into a narrow parallelogram of ricketty houses, so that the ground-plan of the locality would have put one in mind of the sectional outline of an eau-de-cologne bottle. There was a gutter in the middle, obstructed into various lakes and waterfalls by the ingenuity of the resident children, to which the pavement on either side inclined; and one lamp at the extreme end, which left a neutral ground of gloom before the next one in the street, opposite the entrance, caught up the illumination. Some of the houses were destitute of bells and knockers, and the doors remained open all night. Others had whole regiments of little knobs on the posts, one below the other, like the stops of a church organ, with an array of small brass labels accompanying them, that resembled the show-plates put forth by enterprising trunkmakers, graven with the names of various individuals who are commonly supposed to have ordered large outfits of travelling-desks and portmanteaus, which they never paid for.

Mr. Glenalvon Fogg had a bellpull. It was the inside of a window curtain tassel screwed on to a skewer. But this was only for the service of visitors, as he furthermore possessed a key, which in its powers was more complicated than anything the most lock-perplexing engineer ever invented, for nobody could use it but the owner, and sometimes he could not himself. It required to be inserted for a certain distance in a hole five times its size, with no scutcheon ; and then, whilst the top of the door was pulled towards him by the knocker, and the bottom kicked from him by the foot, a peculiar twist was made, and, provided the key was in a complaisant mood, the lock yielded. If these precautions were not taken, the key turned wildly round and round in its socket, producing no more effect than if it had been the door-handle of a night-cab. The whole ceremonial usually caused great distress to new lodgers ; but, the task once achieved and understood, they rejoiced greatly in their double security.

Followed by Vincent Scattergood as closely as the gloom permitted, Mr. Glenalvon Fogg entered his house, and groped his way up the creaking and disjointed staircase. When he had climbed as high as he could go, another door was opened ; and, after he had stumbled over the table of the room, and kicked a chair into the fire-place, he contrived to find a lucifer. Its lurid promethean glare, as he kindled it against the side of the mantelpiece, appeared to give him pleasure, as any sort of tinted fire was wont to do. He waved it about as he would have done a torch, and hummed a few severe melodramatic bars as he lighted the candle, with the air of the Genius of Envy invoking the Fiend of Mischief.

"This is my roof," said Mr. Fogg blandly, as he lighted the small end in the candlestick, — one of the eighteen-penny brass ones come to distress, which, to judge from the displays in shop-windows, furnishing iron-mongers think the chief thing necessary for young couples establishing. "This is my roof."

Vincent looked towards the ceiling, and saw, from the sloping rafters, that he spoke literally.

"And this," continued the dramatist, pointing to a turn-down bedstead, painted in the imitation street-door pattern; "and this my lowly couch. But let content invest it, and the sleep is sweeter than on the gilded pillow." (This was from his last play.) "I am sorry I have no similar accommodation to offer you, but you shall have the mattress."

"I am afraid I am putting you to a great deal of inconvenience," observed Vincent.

"By no means, my dear sir," replied Mr. Fogg, as he began lugging off the mattress. "The sacking is sufficiently soft. With respect to blankets—with respect to blankets—um—I was thinking——"

"Oh, now don't mind me," said Vincent, who perceived that there was not a superfluity of the articles in question. "My coat has kept off a little more cold than this; and, so long as I get shelter, I am not very particular about my bed. I hope you don't object to the smell of tobacco?"

"By no means," returned the dramatist, as he made preparations for his night toilet. "A pipe on the stage is a good effect; it imparts an air of nature to the scene, especially if smoke comes from it. Heigho!" he continued, yawning, as some distant and apparently half-frozen bells wheezed out their chimes. "It is very late, and I shall not be long going to sleep. I dreamt a plot last night—one of wonderful situation. I wonder if I shall do so again."

"Try this first," said Vincent, as he took a small flask from his pocket. "I don't expect it has paid much duty, but possibly it will be none the worse for that."

"Now, by my halidame!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg, tasting the contents; and then, descending to the everyday style, he added, "That is excellent—most admirable. Good night!"

Having thus expressed himself, he curled up in the bedclothes like a human dormouse, and was soon asleep, revelling in visions of sudden entrances, and unanticipated *dénouemens*. Vincent smoked his pipe as he sat over the

hearth—more from habit than custom, for the fire had long since departed—and then, throwing himself upon the mattress, he placed his bundle for a pillow, drew his rough coat closely about him, and soon slumbered as soundly as his host.

It was late in the morning when they awoke. Vincent had a faint recollection of having opened his eyes about daybreak, and seen some aged female wandering about the room; and now a fire was burning in the grate, and a cloth was laid for breakfast variegated at every part with inkspots. The visitor left Mr. Fogg to adorn, whilst he went down to a barber's, and refreshed himself with a shave and an ablution. In about a quarter of an hour he returned, and found his host ready for his meal, of which, however, there was no very great appearance beyond a coffee-pot on the hob.

"I saw some most attractive sausages just now," said Vincent: suppose we have a pound. I am not so very hard run but I think I can afford that trifle."

There was a mute expression of satisfaction at the offer on the features of Mr. Fogg, and Vincent hurried away to make the purchase, soon returning with the luxury, as well as a pot of porter.

"There!" he exclaimed, with a mingled air of triumph and satisfaction, as he placed them on the table; "we shall do now!"

"We must cook them," observed the author, "ourselves."

"Leave that to me," said the other. "I know all about it, provided you supply the means. Have you got a frying-pan?"

"I cannot say I have," said Mr. Fogg; but I have an old property, that will answer every end."

And, going to a large box that was in the corner of the room, he routed amongst the rubbish with which it was apparently filled, and produced a battered theatrical shield, which had apparently been used before for the same purpose.

"There!" he exclaimed, thumping it with his fist, in

token of its soundness, "that was part of a debt from a country manager. I sold him two three-act dramas, out and out, for fifteen shillings, and he could not pay me even that; so I took it out in properties. It has stood a great many desperate combats."

"We'll see if it will stand fire equally well," observed his guest.

Under Vincent's culinary superintendence the sausages, after hissing and sputtering on the shield, were transferred to a dish on the table; and then he drew the chest towards the fire, and sat upon it, as they commenced eating, with an excellent appetite. The meal was pronounced excellent, the porter unequalled; and by the time they had finished they began to feel as if they had been acquainted with each other as many years as they had hours.

"And so you do not wish to go home again?" asked Fogg, in following up a conversation which Vincent started during breakfast respecting his own affairs.

"Well, I don't like to, to tell the truth: in fact, I scarcely know where my home is situated just at present. I'm afraid I have tired the governor out with my unsettled disposition; although, to be sure, he never did much for me. He failed, as a lawyer, about a year ago, and then they all went to live at Boulogne. He had hundreds of chances, but let them all slip through his fingers."

"You did not go with them?"

"No; I went to sea,—the refuge of all the ne'er-dowells. And yet I think I could have got on if I had been regularly put to something. But whenever I spoke to my father about it, he said he would see, and it would be all in good time, and there was no occasion to hurry—you know the kind of character."

"Precisely," said Mr. Fogg; "more effective in the legitimate than a domestic burletta. Fathers should always be energetic in the latter."

"Eh?"

"Excuse me,—a passing idea," replied Mr. Fogg. And then he continued, speaking dramatically, "Go on;

your story interests me : you spoke of friends — of home. You have a mother ? ”

“ Yes ; and a sister — a dear, good girl, who had more sense in her little finger than all the rest of the family put together. Poor Clara ! I believe she was the only one at home who kept things at all together.”

And Vincent remained silent for an instant ; whilst Mr. Fogg poked the fire with a toasting-fork.

“ Have you any plot laid out of what you mean to do ? ” asked the dramatist.

“ Nothing in the world,” returned his visitor. “ I couldn’t stand the sea any longer, and so I left it of my own accord. I must contrive something, though, or it will be getting interesting before long.”

“ Can you write ? ”

“ Of course I can,” replied Vincent, looking as if he were astonished at the question.

“ Yes ; but I mean, can you compose ? — are you anything of an author ? ”

“ Not that I know of.”

“ When I first came to London, I was not much better off than yourself,” observed Mr. Fogg ; “ but I got an introduction to the press, and turned reporter of accidents. I lodged at a public house next an hospital, and got them all first-hand from the porter’s assistant. I was paid, as usual, by the line.”

“ And did that bring you in much ? ” asked Vincent.

“ Well, I was obliged to nurse and humour the accounts a little, and say as much about nothing as I could. I mean, I generally commenced by throwing the whole neighbourhood of the occurrence into a state of the greatest excitement throughout the afternoon, in consequence of a report that such and such a thing had happened. Now, you see, that in itself makes two or three lines ; although, in reality, the chances are that the very next door didn’t know anything in the world about it, or if they did, didn’t care.”

“ I can’t tell whether I could manage that or not,” said

Vincent, "because I never tried. Still, I repeat, I must see about something or another."

"I think I could insure you nine shillings a-week for a month or so," observed Mr. Fogg.

"Indeed!" cried Vincent, eagerly; "and how?"

"By getting you into the pantomime at one of the theatres over the water, as a supernumerary. Should you object to that?"

"I should not object to anything that brings me in one halfpenny," said the other.

"Well, I will see about that at once, then," continued the author. "I have to read a piece at the theatre this morning, and I will mention it to the chief of the supers. In the meantime, whilst I am gone, will you look over this manuscript, and see there is nothing wrong in the nautical phrases."

"I will do so, to the best of my ability," said Vincent.

"And, by the way," said Mr. Fogg, as he took his cloak from the peg, and rubbed his hat with a blacking-brush, "if you think of any good incident in your own family or career, just jot it down, will you? It will all work in."

Vincent smiled as he promised compliance, and betook himself to his new task, with the assistance of a pipe; whilst Mr. Fogg, wishing him good morning, and telling him to make himself at home, started forth upon his dramatic and philanthropic mission.

CHAP. VI.

THE MYSTERIES OF PANTOMIME.

THE stage-entrance of the transpontine theatre, towards which Mr. Fogg now bent his steps, was guarded by a janitor of particularly severe aspect and demeanour. Next to beadles and toll-takers, there is no class of persons so capable of inspiring awe, or repressing exhibitions of what

is commonly understood in well-conducted circles to signify merely the outer husks of corn, as stage-doorkeepers, — those antitheses to turnkeys, whose business it is to sit in a lodge, reversing the ordinary duty of a gaoler, and occasionally occupied in keeping creditors from going in, instead of debtors from coming out.

Scutt — the chorus and supernumeraries called him Mr. Scutt — was a fine specimen of his class ; and he kept the hall of the theatre, whose fortunes Mr. Fogg was about to increase by his dramatic production. He had been in that situation for thirty years, and outlived half a dozen lessees. He had known the fairies rise to peasants, then to pages, and lastly to chambermaids ; he recollected every year in which any piece had been performed, how long it ran, what time it took to get up, and who acted in it. And yet, with all this, it was very remarkable that he had never seen a play in his life, nor did he enjoy a very clear idea of what a dramatic representation was like ; being only conscious that the performers wore dresses different to what they walked about the streets in, from having seen some of them occasionally come down to speak to acquaintances inside the wicket.

Some people have a great desire to get behind the scenes of a theatre, and will invent the most artful schemes, and presume upon the faintest knowledge of anybody therein occupied, to accomplish their object. But Scutt would have been a very unfortunate guardian to have “ tried it on ” upon. There was a force in his speech, and a roughness in his manner, that made the self-sufficient quail, and frightened the timid out of their wits, by the awful “ Sir ” or “ Madam ” with which he commenced his speeches. Indeed, to form a picture of him, exaggerated but characteristic, you must imagine Dr. Johnson, if he had taken to drinking, come to distress, and been provided by Garrick with the situation.

To Mr. Fogg, however, as an author of the establishment, he was most especially polite ; and on this present morning they had a pint of “ deviled ale ” from the house near the theatre, in company. And, this being discussed,

Mr. Fogg took his way to the green-room, invigorated in mind and warmed in body, to read his piece.

In compliance with the prompter's call of the previous evening, which had been locked up in a little cage, like a bank note at a money-changer's, the performers were all assembled, sitting as gravely round the room as if they had been acting Venetian senators; and not wishing to encourage the author too much, or make him think more of his position than he ought to do, as their underling, by laughing at his jokes or admiring his pathos. The stage-manager stirred the fire, and the call-boy brought a glass of water, and then Mr. Fogg began reading his play, which was in two acts, throwing all his exertion into the task of making every part appear desirable, and "bringing up" the bad ones. This took about an hour and a quarter, and then the meeting broke up, having condescended to pronounce the last situation "tremendous."

"Mr. Fogg, — one word, if you please," said an actor to the dramatist, as he left the room.

The person who addressed him was Mr. Dilk, the heavy-melodrama gentleman and general outlaw.

"You'll excuse me," said he, "but I think you may recollect our bargain."

"Indeed, I cannot call it to mind at present," said Mr. Fogg.

"I believe you promised to always give me a leap or a fall," said Mr. Dilk. "Now there is neither in my part, as it stands."

"I don't see how we could bring one in very well," answered Mr. Fogg.

"Can I be shot, and hang to a beam by one leg, after the combat?" asked the actor. "I like an effect, you know — you understand me — an *effect*."

"I can't contrive it, I am afraid," replied the author.

"Then I don't think I can make much of the character," said Mr. Dilk. "Now, look here," he continued, after a minute's pause. "I never yet fell from the flies. Don't you think, if I was to appear suddenly, and confront

the murderer through the roof of the cottage, instead of entering by the door, it would be a hit !”

There was a chance of Mr. Dilk's being discontented with his part, and it was a principal one. So Mr. Fogg agreed to interpolate the situation, albeit it had not much to do with the plot. But had Mr. Dilk wished to slide suddenly down a rope from the hole above the chandelier to the stage, the chances are that he would have gained his point. As it was, he departed perfectly satisfied ; and then Miss Pelham, the leading heroine, attacked him.

“ I hope, sir,” said that lady, in a voice resembling a Meg Merrilies of private life, “ you will not allow Miss Horner to sing her song so immediately before my scene.”

“ There is no other situation for it, my dear lady,” replied Mr. Fogg.

“ Very well, sir,” said Miss Pelham ; “ then every point will be ruined. The comic part, too, is cruelly strong — enough to stifle everything. I am confident you will find it necessary to cut out all the jokes.”

Mr. Fogg could hear no more, but rushed in despair to the room of the stage-manager, being interrupted on his way thither by Miss Horner, who caught him by the arm, and exclaimed, most energetically,

“ Mr. Fogg, you are the author of the piece — recollect *that* — you are the author, and have a right to do as you please. Don't consent to have one line of my part cut. You don't know the evil spirits there are in this theatre. There's a certain person — you understand — always will be the head. Jealousy, and nasty petty feeling ! Don't allow a line to be cut, or the part will not be worth playing.”

Mr. Fogg uttered a groan in response, and took refuge with the stage-manager. Here, after an interview with the captain of the supernumeraries, he procured a weekly nine-shilling engagement for Vincent, and then started home again, receiving a promise that his play should be brought out in three days from that morning, which was declared quite a sufficient space of time to get up the most elaborate minor-theatre drama ever written, including

scenes, dresses, incidental music, and lastly, being of least consequence, the words of the author.

Vincent had not been idle at his new task during his patron's absence ; and, the ideas of a dramatist respecting nautical subjects being somewhat opposed to what they are in reality, he found plenty to alter or improve upon. Mr. Fogg was greatly set at ease within himself by these corrections ; and, on the strength of their day's prosperity, they dined together at an *alamode* beef house in the vicinity, and therein consumed unknown meats of richly-spiced flavour, inscrutable gravy, and india-rubber texture.

The pantomime being the last piece, Vincent was not required at the theatre until half-past nine, at which hour he wended his way thither, accompanied by his host. They passed the stage-door, where he was formally introduced to Scutt, that he might be known again ; and then, diving into various obscure labyrinths, Mr. Fogg at last conducted him to the chief dressing-room of the "supers."

It was a rough, bare apartment, something like a kitchen without its appointments, and a prolonged dresser running all round it. There was a coke fire at one end, and over the mantel-piece two bits of broken looking-glass, and some burnt ends of corks, which far outrivalled the curious natural products of Macassar and Columbia in the rapidity with which they produced mustachios and whiskers. The dresser was covered with demoniacal properties, and round the walls hung a series of heads, supernaturally large, as if they had just been decapitated from giants. But there was nothing ghastly in their appearance ; on the contrary, the expression of their features invariably inclined to conviviality ; — so much so, that they appeared in the constant enjoyment of a perpetual joke. And when any of the supernumeraries, who were not men remarkable for hilarious countenances, put one of these heads on, you immediately invested him with the unceasing merriment it expressed, and gave him credit for great comic powers and extensive humour : although, from the circumstance of his being compelled to talk through the nostrils, his voice, when he spoke, somewhat disappointed you in its general

effect, being anti-stentorian, and rather disproportioned to the head it issued from.

Vincent was introduced by Mr. Fogg to an "Evil Genius," known to the rest as Poddy, and not appearing to rejoice in any cognomination, who promised to show the new member of the company his business. Poddy was the butt of the dressing-room. He had been a "super" all his life, never having arrived at the dignity of delivering a message, nor indeed opening his mouth at all upon the stage, except when he cheered, as a "mob" in Julius Cæsar. He was remarkable for wearing everything much too large for him, especially helmets, which always came over his eyes. But his great practical knowledge made him generally useful, and he was never without an engagement at one or the other of the theatres. No one could carry an emblazoned banner so well as Poddy, so as never to show the back of it, but always to keep it on the same plane to the audience, in whatever direction he might be going. And in pantomime he was equally great, and would change his dress a dozen times in the course of the evening. His personation of the simple-hearted shopkeeper who admits the clown into partnership, upon the bare strength of his obsequious bows and promissory advantages was, as a whole, perfect ; and in the tumult of popular excitement, at the end of the scene in which the characters are changed, he performed an unwary image-man, of unsteady footing, in a manner which usually drew down a roar of applause ; more particularly when a flabby fish, hurled by an unseen assailant, levelled him with the ground, and his unknown busts of *papier maché* rolled silently and unbroken about the stage.

No one but Poddy could fall back so naturally into the "RASPBERRY JAM," which in pantomimes appears to be usually kept loose in a hamper ; no one could afterwards exhibit the injury his fashionable summer trowsers had sustained from the accident with such effect. And when, as the maimed member of the Legion, he limped from a box, labelled "Damaged fruit from Spain," and had his crutches kicked away from under him by the clown in a heartless

and unprovoked manner, his physical capabilities for pantomimic victims were singularly apparent. He regretted that the slide formed by the application of the purloined butter to the ground was not more frequently introduced, maintaining that, however ancient a joke was, people always laughed at it just the same; and that, however slow a Christmas piece might be going, the forcible intrusion of a hat over the eyes of a policeman, or, indeed, any acknowledged authority, always recalled the complete satisfaction of the audience.

By the direction of this experienced gentleman, Vincent was thrust into a painted envelope, of the last supernatural fashion, with canvas and whalebone wings running from the heels to the wrists. A terrible head, with green tinsel cheeks, and red worsted hair, was then added; and finally as the pantomime was about to commence, he took his place with some others similarly attired, in a large contrivance which was to descend from the back of the stage upon an inclined plane, and then open; being ostensibly drawn by two dragons, but in reality let down by two carpenters with a third, who rode behind to turn the revolving star, and light the red fire the minute the adamantine portals in front flew open. At length the piece began, and when the gong gave the signal, the apparatus started off, Vincent keeping his feet tolerably well, from his nautical practice, although the progress was somewhat vague, and to common minds alarming; much resembling the unsteady and awe-inspiring journey which is made down a steep beach in a bathing-machine let down from above high-water-mark by a windlass; at which period the ignorance of where you are going, and the knowledge of the approaching immersion, usually combine to produce a state of feeling far from agreeable, the pulsation of your own heart being alone equalled by the bumping of the pinless cushion against the wooden walls of the vehicular tenement.

In this his first scene, in which the chief action was to express obedience, by assuming the position of the fighting gladiator, looking upon the ground after something he had lost, Vincent acquitted himself remarkably well; so much

so, that he was complimented by Poddy thereon when he returned to the dressing-room ; in return for which he stood some gin-and-water, and they drank it whilst they changed their costumes to those of different every-day characters allotted to them.

"Pork, eel, mutton, or mince," said a female voice, calling attention to itself by a previous knock at the door.

"Let me recommend you a pie," said Poddy to Vincent. "It is the nourishingest thing going for a penny ; a great card to supers."

Vincent declined the refreshment thus spoken so highly of.

"I'll have half a pork tart with any one who'll toss with me for it," cried a Fiend of Despair. "Now, Poddy, you are always game. Sudden death — cry to me."

"Woman !" ejaculated Poddy.

"It's a man !" returned the spirit, with fiendish triumph, as he took off his head, in anticipation of the repast, never allowing his adversary to see which side the money turned up. "You may get two, if you like."

"Poor Poddy is very unlucky ; he always loses," remarked another demon, in tones of commiseration.

This was followed by a general laugh, implying a hidden joke, and possibly a reflection on Poddy's sagacity ; who, however, shared the confectionary with his supernatural opponent, and then finished his toilet as the foreign gentleman in tights, with an eye-glass, who was to have his coat torn off by rival omnibus cads, and the discovery made that he had no shirt on. Several of the other supernumeraries dressed as visitors to an exhibition, including Vincent, who retained his half-nautical attire ; others prepared to keep toy and pickle-shops, in frock-coats, and long hair, — the prevalent style of pantomimic tradesmen who have to rush in frantic surprise from their houses, after the clown has knocked violently at the door, and laid himself down in front of it, or the harlequin has leapt through the large jar of "CAPERS" in the window, the label whereof directly flaps down and changes to "PICKLED ;" and then

they went up to the green-room, which was far above them ; for, as the opening scene was that remarkable portion of the globe, "the centre of the earth," in which the demons had to figure, the management had ably kept up the delusion, by placing them as near that locality as the resources of the theatre would permit.

The green-room presented many tokens of that heterogeneous confusion which may be imagined to exist behind the scenes of a theatre during the performance of a bustling pantomime. All sorts of curious "properties"—fairies' wands, wicker shapes, and monstrous heads—were lying about, brought thither by the call-boy, to be in readiness. Several of the characters also were sitting round, awaiting the moment of their appearance, the chief part being the lady visitors to the aforementioned exhibition, and promenaders, who were elegantly attired in scanty cloaks and cardinals of pink glazed calico, trimmed with white rabbit-skin dotted black, which had a fashionable effect. And every now and then the harlequin or clown rushed in, panting and exhausted, and leaned their heads upon the mantelpiece for support, whilst torn to pieces by a hacking cough, or refreshed themselves from a jug of barley-water, common to the chief pantomimists, placed on a shelf in the corner of the room ; but before they had recovered, they were always called off again. The harlequin had to take fresh leaps whether he had breath or not ; and the clown's duty was to throw the house into convulsions by a moral lyric, descriptive of an unprovoked assault committed by several ill-conducted lads upon an ancient woman of diminutive stature, who supported herself by retailing apples, but was slightly addicted to an unmentioned liquor, only to be guessed at by its rhyme to the last verse, unless supplied by any youth of quick perception in the gallery.

At the end of the room were two little children, mere infants, asleep ; one a fair-haired thing of four years old, and the other somewhat its senior. They had been tied to a floating cloud as fairies in the opening scene, and now were not again wanted until the conclusion. Their little legs had trotted backwards and forwards a long distance

during the day to and from the theatre ; and their night's work only commenced when the night was already advanced. They were paid sixpence an evening for their attendance ; and the weekly three shillings doled from the treasury was a sum not to be despised. But the effects of this artificial existence were painfully visible ; for their lips were parched and fevered, their cheeks hollow and pale, even in spite of the daub of vermilion hastily applied by the dresser, and their limbs shrunk and wasted. To the audience, however, they were smiling elves, who appropriately peopled the "Realms of Joy," to the centre of which blissful region their presence was confined ; and so long as this end was answered, little else was cared for.

In front of the curtain, amongst the audience, there were many other children, to whose amusement these little martyrs ministered. They were not asleep, nor were they even tired—not they ; for every means that could be devised to lessen the fatigue attendant upon this one instance of prolonged "going to bed" had been carefully put into practice. And when Vincent appeared again upon the stage, he could see their merry smiling faces through the glare of the foot-lights that blazed and smoked between them, and, albeit not over addicted to quiet reflection, could not help comparing their real elfin mirth with the fictitious spirits he had just quitted. And most beautiful to all, although all knew not at the moment from what agency their own sudden exhilaration sprang, was their sunny and unalloyed laughter, which rang in joyous peals from one box to another, clear and musical above the coarser shouts of merriment that greeted any unforeseen comicality.

There are few more pleasant things in life, in this matter-of-fact conventional world of ours, than taking a child for the first time to a pantomime ; there is nothing that re-opens the spring of old feelings and recollections with such a burst of gladness, however closed up and encrusted over the well may be, by rust accumulated from the damp of disappointment, and the chill of worldly buffeting and unrealised hope. Their mirth is truly glorious : glorious from its purity and reality : glorious from its in-

spiring effects upon our own hippled and tarnished spirits. And Heaven forbid there should be any whose withered sympathies are not refreshed by it ! for they must either be proof against all pleasant emotions, or never have known what a home was, when they numbered no more years than the joyous children around them.

The pantomime at last concluded. Men in dirty jackets and paper caps, who dispensed dazzling brilliancy which flickered in coloured lights upon the concluding *tableau*, ignited trays of prismatic fires behind the side-scenes ; the little fairies were aroused from their real visions of everyday life to the fictitious regions of enchantment. The curtain fell upon the magic realms of eternal bliss, which in ten minutes more were cold, dark, and unpeopled : the clown put his head under the drop-scene, and wished the audience " Good night," to provoke a parting laugh ; and then Vincent rejoined Mr. Fogg, who had haunted the theatre throughout the evening, and was now waiting for him, talking to Scutt in the hall, in the full importance of being inside the exclusive wicket, whilst many friends and relations of the demons and sprites were in attendance without.

" Well, how do you like your new engagement ? " said the author to his new friend, as they proceeded homewards.

" Oh, very well," returned Vincent unconcernedly ; " it will do until I get tired of it, and then I must find something else. I never kept to anything above a few months."

" Let me recommend you," continued Mr. Fogg, " not to fall in love. Green-room attachments usually end in poverty and quarrelling."

" I do not think that there is much fear of that, from what I have seen to-night," answered Vincent.

" You cannot tell. When I married the late Mrs. Fogg's family ——"

" Who ? " interrupted Vincent.

" My wife's family — two sisters and three brothers, unemployed : I married them all one hapless morning. When I did this, I thought I made a prudent step. But I was mistaken."

"In what manner?"

"Because professional people should never marry one another. At that time I performed, instead of wrote; my late wife was also an actress; and so the properties, effects, and situations of our own domestic drama never went well, for neither of us had time to look to them."

"But you could both earn money at your profession."

"When we both got engagements. It was acknowledged that I bore my wife down a rocky pass better than anybody else; but then every play had not a rocky pass in it, and so the time I spent in carrying her up and down the top flight of stairs at our lodgings, for practice, was thrown away. And, you see, being such a clever actress, when we were not engaged, the realities of life came but strangely."

Mr. Fogg became evidently affected by recollections, and for a time they walked on in silence; but the toll of Waterloo Bridge recalled him to the present, and when he got on to that structure, he stopped suddenly, and observed to Vincent,

"There has never been done with this bridge what there might have been."

"So I have often heard my father say," returned the other; "he was a shareholder."

"I meant in a dramatic, rather than a speculative point of view," said Mr. Fogg. "What a flat that shot-tower would make, painted in neutral tint, the windows transparent, and lighted up with a regulation ten-inch moon behind it! Then a 'set' of the roofs and chimney-pots before it; and, in front of all, the balustrades, built! It would save any last act that was ever written."

"I think it would be very effective, little as I know about theatricals," said Vincent, gently drawing Mr. Fogg onward, for it was very cold. "After all, the principal rule for success appears to me to consist in showing people what they know something about."

"You are right," said Mr. Fogg; "I find it so in the drama. Tell them pleasantly what they are already acquainted with, and they will applaud; and say it is what they knew, but never thought about. Confound them

with deep reasoning, which they do not altogether see and they will call you dull. You must try and write yourself."

Vincent expressed his readiness to attempt anything that would tend to fill his almost exhausted purse; and then the conversation went off into several ramifications, which lasted until they arrived at Mr. Fogg's abode, where he again took up his residence.

CHAP. VII.

MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL.

It was some little time before the confusion excited by the last ebullition of Mr. Joe Jollit's humorous idiosyncrasy had subsided; and when it did it was very evident that the festivities of Mr. Snarry's *réunion* had received a check which could not be very easily got rid of. For the host himself looked with ghastly dismay towards replacing the fractured glasses and decanters; Lisbeth was too much hurried by the unexpected and unprovoked assault to which she had been subjected, to care any longer in what manner the wants of the guests were administered to; and the voices of the Chicksands were heard in fearful anger, betokening a stormy morrow for the hapless Snarry. Mr. Joe Jollit, too, was completely crestfallen,—"funny men" are soon abashed when any awkward *contretenps* arises,—and slunk off somewhat secretly, after making a vague offer to the host to pay for what he had broken; and then the rest of the company went away one by one, each thanking Mr. Snarry, as they departed, for the very delightful evening they had spent. Mr. Chicksand showed them all out of the street-door, in his white Berlin gloves, and received the parting shillings, in his capacity of imaginary butler, which somewhat consoled him; except that the illusion was carried a little too far in the case of Mr. Bam, who despatched him, in a very off-hand manner, some distance

up the road, to get a cab for Mrs. Hankins and her sister ; and never gave him anything after all.

In the mean time the new-comers had been ushered into the parlour, the only room in the house at present unoccupied. Little conversation passed between them, except a few expressions of discomfort, for they appeared worn out, and jaded with the voyage. The young girl sat close to her mother, on a low cushion by her side, and the gentleman, without dispossessing himself of his travelling-costume, marched impatiently up and down the room ; whilst the youth was already asleep in a large arm-chair, which had been an easy one before the springs were dislocated, and stuck up in various uncomfortable positions from the seat. But fatigue is a good anodyne, and he slept as soundly as he would have done in the most luxurious bed ever contrived.

At last everybody had gone, and then, with a thousand apologies, Mrs. Chicksand ushered her new tenants into the drawing-room, now lighted by a single candle, but still redolent of evening-party odours, — lamps which had been blown out, pachouli, white-wine vapours, and cut oranges. The arrangements for the night were soon made, Mr. Bodle having given up his bed to the young gentleman, and slept on the sofa himself ; the demand being made upon the strength of his not having paid for his last fortnight of occupancy. And, in another half hour, the halls of revelry were wrapt in silence, everybody being asleep but Mr. Snarry, who kept awake for the purpose of holding a long argument with himself as to whether the evening had gone off well, or otherwise, hunting up every pleasant reminiscence he could command to cheat himself out of the conviction that the termination had been rather unfortunate.

The inmates of the house slept until a late hour the next morning, except Mr. Snarry, whose duties called him with heavy eyelids to Threadneedle Street, and Mr. Bodle, who expected a pupil. But at length they were collected at breakfast, and certainly appeared in a somewhat more cheerful aspect than they had done on the preceding evening ; for the morning was clear, frosty, and exhilarating,

the Chicksand Wallsend blazed and crackled in the grate, and a bright sunbeam shot into the apartment, as if to greet the party assembled with a pleasant welcome.

Mr. Scattergood, a stout, heavy-looking man, who did not appear capable of any particular emotion, was seated by the fire, apparently taking great interest in his son's proceedings, who was making some toast. His wife had once been very handsome; traces of beauty still remained in her features, which, however, spoke deeply of trouble and long-continued trials; and even the very good-looking girl who was superintending the breakfast-table bore a thoughtful and half-sad expression upon her face, which ill accorded with her years. And this gave her the appearance of being somewhat older than she looked; for Clara Scattergood was not yet eighteen: and, without being absolutely beautiful, there was a sweetness and intelligence in her countenance which was sure to attract, when a higher style of female loveliness would have been passed unnoticed. She was a softened and feminine likeness of her brother Vincent, with whom we are already acquainted. Her eyes, like his, were large and dark, but more tranquil and confiding in their expression; and her black hair, which grew with the same luxuriance, fell in heavy rolling curls over her fair neck and shoulders, unconfined by tie or comb of any kind. She was now evidently trying to bear up against her own feelings, as she assumed a cheerful tone of speaking. But she was pale, and her eyelids were red. She had evidently been weeping during the night.

"I wonder when we shall hear from Vincent," observed Clara, as she took her father his coffee. "I hope they will forward our letters that come to Boulogne, without loss of time. It is three months since we had any news of him."

"It will all come in good time, my Clara," said Mr. Scattergood. "I see no reason why he should not be quite well."

"It seemed hard not to have him with us at Christmas," continued Clara. "It was the first time we had ever been separated."

"I am afraid we must make up our minds to many such

separations, my love," observed her mother, "until times are a little changed. Our first business will be to see about Frederick's going to school. My brother has given him a presentation, and will pay his first year's expenses. We should look to it without delay."

The little boy, who was still before the fire, did not appear to enter into the urgency for any hurry, as his face assumed a very lugubrious expression.

"Well, we will see about it next week," observed his father.

"Why not at once, papa?" inquired Clara. "He is perfectly ready to go this very day, if requisite. And perhaps uncle might be hurt at our not appearing to feel an interest in his handsome offer."

"I think I have too much to do at present to see about it," replied Mr. Scattergood.

"I am really too poorly," said the mother, and her appearance bore out the truth of her words, "or I would go myself to the master's where my brother has arranged for him to board. We should at present study everything by which our expenses may be diminished."

"I'm sure I eat very little," said Frederick, as he looked with an appealing expression in his mother's face. "I think we had better let papa settle it all."

The boy knew his father's disposition, and that a prolonged vacation would await his taking the affair in hand.

"I think I could go with him myself, if you have no objection," continued Clara. "At all events, we could call on the gentleman he is to live with, and make some arrangements. I see nothing to hinder us from going there to-day."

Mrs. Scattergood appeared to think with her daughter, and in spite of her husband's apathy concerning the undertaking, and Frederick's downcast looks, it was finally agreed that Clara should go with her brother that morning, and prepare the way for his entering the public school to which he had procured the presentation. She was not long, after breakfast, in getting ready for the journey; and then, with her young companion, they rode to London Bridge in an omnibus, and set off in quest of the establishment.

Thames Street is not exactly the thoroughfare which any one would select by choice for a promenade, unless they had qualified themselves to walk upon its very narrow pavement by a course of lessons upon the tight rope; and even then there are countless inconveniences to encounter. The unwieldy waggons appear to take delight in threatening to crush timid pedestrians with their huge wheels; and the iron-bound posts join in the conspiracy, and lean obstinately back against the houses, until, in the despair from the perfect impracticability of passing between them and the wall, the hapless wanderer plunges madly into the mud and gutters, and pursues his onward course as he best may. Everything in Thames Street is identified with the locality. Its waggons are, apparently, never seen anywhere else, nor are the men of ponderous highlows and mighty whips who guide them; its very mud has a peculiarly commercial and wharfish look, preternaturally remaining in the same state of fluidity during the hottest summer; and if you met the same people who jostle you on the scanty footpath in any other part of the metropolis, you would stare at them as natural curiosities, evidently as much out of their place as frogs in Regent Street.

In one of the many lanes which run up from Thames Street, between London and Southwark bridges, anybody who has the temerity to venture into such obscure districts, may perceive a long dingy brick building, with little claims to architectural beauty, occupying a very large proportion of one side of the thoroughfare. It is adorned by six or seven gaunt, chapel-looking windows, with semicircular tops: and, on sultry summer afternoons, when their casements are thrown open, an academic hum disturbs the usual silence of the district, broken only at other times by the cries of men from one to the other, as ponderous wool-sacks and packages slowly ascend from waggons to the top-stories of adjoining warehouses. But when they are closed, all around is severely silent, except at stated hours of the day, and then a rush of juvenile animation takes place from the old portal; and the lane instantaneously swarms with the jacketed and lay-down-collared youth of England, each

with his complement of learning dangling by a strap from his hand, from the ponderous lexicon to the light *Exempla Minora*, to be used as a weapon of attack, or an auxiliary to study, as occasion may demand. The ancient statutes of the building provide that one hundred boys shall be here taught at five shillings per quarter, fifty at half-a-crown per quarter, and a hundred, or upwards, for nothing. But as these rules were made in days of "wonderful sacrifice," when sheep were sold for fourpence each, and poultry for a penny, it was subsequently found necessary to alter them, and make everybody pay a respectable sum, in keeping with the importance of the academy. An inscription over the doorway of the building will tell the traveller that it is Merchant Tailors' School. We should more agreeably write "Taylors," in compliance with the taste of its supporters, who wish it distinctly to be understood that it has "no connection with any other establishment" either of cheap outfitters, or retailers of "Gent.'s Fashionable Wrappers," which thoughtless people might be apt to imagine, from its name.

Clara and Frederick went to the door as soon as they found out it was the place they were in search of. But there was no porter, nor bell to summon one with; neither did anybody appear, until an old woman emerged from a kind of cupboard under the stairs; and from her they learnt that the Rev. Mr. Snap, with whom it was intended Frederick should board, lived some little distance from the school. She gave them some directions as to the nearest way to his abode, and then the brother and sister made the best of their way to his house.

The Reverend Mr. Snap was at home. He was an elderly man, very pompous and scholastic, whose very glance spoke of difficult Greek verbs, and wonderfully complicated numbers to be imperatively found out, where not even x was given as a clue. Abstruse paradigms and remote derivations were, so to speak, at the extremities of all his fingers; and the manner in which he worked out deep problems, of no use when they were discovered, of old women trying to determine how many eggs they had broken

without counting them, and other artful puzzles, by playing at noughts and crosses, and multiplying *a* into *b* many times, was a wondrous thing to reflect upon. He received Clara and her brother in his study, and, somewhat relaxed from his usual staid bearing, as he contemplated her intelligence and address.

"I have heard from your uncle respecting his intentions," said the master. "He wishes to know if there is any chance of the ultimate election of your brother. How old are you, little boy?"

"Ten last May, sir," replied Fred, who was sitting in great tremor on the very edge of a chair, close to his sister, making a bird's nest of his pocket-handerchief.

"Mamma wished him to be entered as soon as it could be done conveniently," said Clara. "Our circumstances are somewhat changed, sir, to what they were; and every one at home is an additional expense, however trifling."

"He can enter immediately, if that will suit you," answered Mr. Snap. "The Christmas vacation is just finished, and it will be as good a time for him as any other to commence."

"Mamma would have come herself, sir, to have seen you," remarked Clara; "but she is very poorly, having only arrived yesterday from Boulogne; and papa's occupations usually prevent him from interfering much in our family arrangements."

"So I have heard," answered Mr. Snap, in a tone which implied that he was somewhat acquainted with Mr. Scattergood's character. "But they have sent a very satisfactory representative." And Mr. Snap even smiled. "You may go home, and say that I shall be ready to receive your brother whenever he is ready to come."

If it had remained with Frederick, possibly his advent would not have taken place until a very remote period. As it was, he made his bow to the Reverend Mr. Snap with great alacrity, apparently very glad to quit his presence. And then, satisfied with the result of her mission, Clara took his hand, and they returned home, Freddy being encouraged to walk thither by the example of his sister, who

led him to think it was not such a long way, after all, and scarcely worth getting into an omnibus for ; holding out a hope that he should have the shilling thus saved to add to the contents of his money-box, when the particularly black day of the week came upon which he was to go, for the first time, to Merchant Taylors' School.

CHAP. VIII.

MRS. CHICKSAND'S LODGERS. — THE ARRIVAL OF BLACK MONDAY.

It did not take a very long time to prepare the youngest olive of the Scattergood family for his career at a public school. Clara was indefatigable, relieving her mother of all extra trouble in arranging his wardrobe, purchasing whatever was wanted, and, above all, cheering her brother, and keeping up his spirits by holding forth bright pictures of his approaching change. For Freddy, after the manner of most little boys similarly situated, did not appear to enter fully into the advantages of his position, but was somewhat discontented thereat. In fact, Mrs. Chicksand, who had an eye that penetrated the breasts of her lodgers, as well as their closets and tea-caddies, remarked, that on the following morning he must have left his couch upon the opposite side to that normally appropriated to such a proceeding ; which insinuation, meant to convey an allegorical idea of sulks, might be considered as much owing to Lisbeth as himself, inasmuch as he slept in a French bed, which the handmaiden pushed close up to the walls, leaving no choice of sides but the one pronounced the wrong one.

Mr. Scattergood also exerted himself. He took great pains in undertaking to accomplish everything that was of no use when done, and went out-of-the-way distances, as his inclination led him, to procure articles that were not wanted ; and, finally, he insisted upon marking all the new linen of his son in an elaborate and minutely-correct manner,

with some ink of his own manufacturing, which took one day to make, and another to use, and washed out the first time, without leaving a trace behind. But then it saved the expense of a bottle at the chemist's: it was an indolent occupation that Mr. Scattergood rejoiced in; and it looked as if he was taking a share in the family exertions.

Of course there was to be a cake. Whoever went to school without one? What balm was ever found equal to it for the home-sick yearnings of little boys? Clara undertook to make it herself, and, for that purpose, descended to the kitchen on the morning antecedent to Frederick's departure.

Mrs. Chicksand was there also, fully employed, apparently conducting a small private wash, manufacturing a meat-pie, and superintending an unknown preparation that was simmering on the fire, all at once. But these manifold occupations did not prevent her from talking incessantly to Clara, as was her wont with anybody who would listen to her; the most favourite topic being the domestic affairs of her establishment, and the characteristics of her tenants.

"We've had a bad winter of it," said Mrs. Chicksand, as she screwed the fire-place together, took a glance at the contents of the saucepan, and then shook out a lot of little wet frills and cuffs, and threw them lightly upon one another to await the iron; "a very bad winter, indeed, Miss," she continued, wishing a reply to her remark.

"Very cold, indeed," answered Clara; "but I think that is all over."

And she looked towards the window in confirmation of her remark, where a smoky canary of irregular plumage was disporting in the sunbeam, and very industriously trying to extract nourishment from a knot of wire in his cage, in lieu of a bit of lump-sugar.

"I was n't complaining of the weather," said Mrs. Chicksand. "I meant it had been a bad time for my lodgings."

"I am sorry to hear that, Mrs. Chicksand," observed Clara. "Were the rooms empty, then?"

"Oh, my rooms are always full, thank goodness. Always,"

responded Mrs. Chicksand, with a firmness of asseveration calculated entirely to scare anybody from daring to think to the contrary, and intended to assure her tenants that they were there located as an especial favour, by a lucky chance that did not happen often, and one which they could not possibly appreciate sufficiently.

"I never knew them empty above a week," continued Mrs. Chicksand, as if she had been upon her oath before the Lord Mayor, or any other sitting magistrate. And then, finding no response to her affirmation, she went on :

"But the lodgers have all been the wrong sort — they did no good for the house — too much in the chop and poultry way. They harricoed all that was left the next day, or briled the legs for breakfast. Give me a joint : that's what I say."

"But it does not suit everybody to have joints always," said Clara, as she quietly continued her employment.

"There it is, Miss," answered Mrs. Chicksand ; "but, then, how are the housekeepers to live? As I said to Mrs. Walton, next door, what a 'let' she made with them Pullens — five months, and they never had anything up twice."

"That was very fortunate for Mrs. Walton, of course," said Clara.

"Fortunate, indeed, Miss," replied the landlady ; "a heavenly blessing ! I never get such catches. Our second floor's all very well ; but Mr. Bodle's the stingiest person I ever knew. He has a rabbit for dinner, and eats it all ; and then buys baked potatoes in the street, and brings them home for supper in his pocket."

"Perhaps Mr. Bodle likes them," said Clara mildly.

"He may, but I don't," said Mrs. Chicksand. "And then he won't dine when Mr. Snarry does, and the fire has to be kept in, on purpose to cook his minikins."

The fire appeared so accustomed to be kept in, and in remarkably small limits too, that this could scarcely be considered as an evil, upon reflection.

"I should be much obliged to you for a larger basin, Mrs. Chicksand," said Clara, wishing to turn the subject.

"Yes, Miss, certainly; but I must get it myself, for Lisbeth's at the top of the house. Oh, she's the artfullest hussy, she is. The time she takes making the beds in the front rooms, and never hears the door, you wouldn't credit: always gaping at the—"

The conclusion of the speech died away in the echoes of the back kitchen; but the hostess returned almost immediately, inquiring,

"What's Master Frederick expected to take with him, Miss?"

"He must have a fork and spoon, I believe," replied Clara, "and half-a-dozen towels."

"Umph! a pretty thing, indeed. To be left behind him, I presume," said Mrs. Chicksand, with indignation. "Suppose I made a rule for each of my floors to bring six pairs of boots and a coal-scoop, on the same terms,—why, I should get nobody."

Clara thought it more than probable.

"I never submitted to the imposition but once, when my Anna Maria went to a ceremony for young ladies at Balham Hill," continued Mrs. Chicksand. "Take my advice, Miss, and tell your mamma to send the perfect substitute for plate. *I* should."

"I am afraid that would not do," said Clara.

"Oh, it's a fine thing," answered the landlady, "better than Sheffield goods. You wear the silver away from them in a very short time; but you may rub the substitute for ever before you get the silver off that."

And Mrs. Chicksand attacked a small collar somewhat savagely with a flat-iron, to give weight to her opinions.

The last thing established was the great treasure of all schoolboys—the box; not the black trunk, with the initials of the owner in brass nails on the top, together with the rusty heads of tacks left behind, when former directions had been torn away, for the clothes; nor the hair-covered ark with the literary lining, dotted over with black barley-corns, for books and supplementaries; but *the* box, *par excellence*—the plain deal cabinet, with the iron-bound corners, japanned lock, and plebeian key. And wonderful

were its stores ; to pass over the mighty cake which half-filled it, and the pot of jam wedged down upon its new spongy bulk, like a watch-tower on a castlekeep, as things which would be there of course. There was an invalid accordion, with a few notes suffering from croup, a present from Mr. Bodle ; and two mystic conjuring tricks, whereby a piece of whip-cord could be drawn through a friend's nose, and a bad sixpence made to appear as though it had melted into dross. The Lothairs and Grindoffs of departed theatres were also included, pasted upon cards of the Infant Orphan Asylum, and weak in the ankles ; and there was a box of dominoes, a ball of string, a remarkable collection of seals taken from letters, stored in a tin box with a half sovereign soldered on to the lid, and a three-bladed knife of the best cast-iron. And, lastly, there was a little red purse, also the product of Clara's industry, through the meshes of which pieces of new money glittered with gratifying brightness ; not a great sum, to be sure, but as much as could be afforded, and a perfect fortune to Freddy, increased when his sister quietly added half-a-crown to the contents from her own small allowance, without saying a word to anybody.

At length the day arrived upon which the young pupil was to make his *début* at the public school. A large cab was brought to the door in the afternoon by Lisbeth, who rode in it all the way from the stand, to her great gratification ; and, when part of the luggage had been put inside, and part on the box, Mrs. Scattergood and the little fellow entered. Frederick was rather downcast. It was the first time he had ever been from home ; and, in spite of all the received affirmations that the schoolboy's is the happiest scene of life, there are few trials which await us in after periods sharper than that parting,—in comparison with our ignorance of trouble, and inability to bear it, none. The promise of Clara that she would write to him the next day somewhat cheered him ; more so than his father's assertion, that Easter would come before he could turn round, which he immediately and practically refuted. But he did not wish Mrs. Chicksand, who waited on the steps,

to see that he had been crying ; so, as the glass was pulled up, he nodded to her with a smiling face, and then to Clara, who was at the window. The sunshine was, however, very transient, — an April gleam followed by a shower. And then he remained quiet, with his hand within his mother's, until they arrived at their destination, when he again mustered up a little expression of cheerfulness.

The house of the Reverend Mr. Snap was not calculated to enliven anybody whose feelings inclined to despondency. It was situated at the extreme end of a dreary court in the vicinity of the school — a *cul de sac* so narrow that the sun's rays never fell upon the melancholy blue flags that paved it, nor, indeed, anywhere else, except by reflection from the top windows of the opposite houses. It was approached by a gloomy archway, and guarded by an attenuated iron gate, that swung to with a dismal clang after anybody invaded its solemn precincts, echoing up the yard, and announcing the approach of the bold visitor. It held out too little promise even, to allure organs or broom-girls into its gloom ; and if they had come, the chances are that the stern, cold faces carved on the key-stones over the doors would have frightened them away again. Nor did the boys venture inside the gate to play at pitch-farthing, or three holes ; the sound of their own voices frightened them in the dead repose. And so the chief excitement that could be calculated upon by the inhabitants with any certainty was the advent of the milk. A wet Good Friday at Hampstead would have been a scene of wild and delirious gaiety compared to the dejected aspect of College Court. Some secluded localities are spoken of as sleepy-looking places : but this had the stark, gloomy quietude of death.

Mrs. Scattergood and Fred alighted, and entered the house. There was a short interview with Mr. Snap in his study, in which he spoke much of the judicious selection made by the family in choosing so excellent a school for their son. And then, when the servant and the coachman had brought up the boxes, and deposited them in the passage in the best possible position they could

select for everybody to tumble over them who passed either way, Mrs. Scattergood rose to take her leave. Mr. Snap accompanied her to the door, although Frederick would rather have gone with her alone, for he wished to tell her once more, without Mr. Snap hearing it, to be sure and write to him, for fear she should forget to do so, as she had only been requested fifty times that morning to bear it in mind, and to come and see him soon ; and ask him home before long ; and not to touch his theatre, which was too large to bring with him, whilst he was away, but to leave everything just as he had seen it last : and to give his love to Clara and his father, and be sure and tell Clara to write too. All these requests were made in the short journey from the study to the street-door, in a very hurried and tremulous little voice, and most urgently impressed upon Mrs. Scattergood's attention. The reverend gentleman condescended to open the door himself, finding that the servant, for whom he rang when his visitor was about to depart, did not pay any attention to the summons—a circumstance which often happens in many other establishments besides Mr. Snap's where a moment's reflection would prove how impracticable it was, now that magic has left the earth, for the man who was cleaning knives in his shirt-sleeves and canvas apron, in some secret excavation far below the level of high-water in the area-butt, to appear as soon as he heard the bell, —a slave to the ring, —in the perfect costume of his class, spotless and trim as though he were kept for nothing else but the especial service of morning visitors.

Frederick was a long time saying good-bye to his mother. No one would have believed those two simple words could have been made to occupy so many seconds in their delivery. He held her hand as though he never wished to let it go from his grasp ; and it was not until she had kissed him again and again, and whispered to him to sustain his character of being a man before Mr. Snap, that he allowed her to depart. And even then he would have run after her when she was half-way down the court, to have repeated his farewell, had not Mr.

Snap drawn him back, and closed the door. Mrs. Scattergood, who had not ventured to look back, heard its sound ; it would be difficult to tell which heart sunk most at the noise of its shutting-to, the mother's or her boy's.

The four other boarders, who lived with Mr. Snap, were at afternoon-school, so Frederick was shown into the room appropriated to them, and there left to himself. It was a large, bare, dreary place, with only four moveables of any kind in it, by way of furniture ; and these were a long deal table, hacked all over with initials and names, two forms, and the fender. To make the room better adapted to the purposes of study, from the lack of external objects to distract the attention, the lower halves of the windows were painted white ; or rather they had been once, but now they were turning to a neutral dirt tint, relieved by various arabesques, stencilled with the fingernail on their surface, according to the taste of the designer. This appeared usually to be in the vein of imaginative satire, and was principally directed against Mr. Snap, who was more than once delineated in outline as suffering death by hanging, in great bodily agony, and from a gallows fashioned after the one into whose noose Punch prevails upon the jocose turnkey to put his head, in the laudable desire of promoting knowledge by practical demonstration.

The little boy drew his box, which had been taken into the room, towards the fire-place, and sat down upon it. There was no poker to stir the fire into a little more cheerful aspect ; and so he contented himself with watching the cinders, as they formed burning caverns and precipices, suddenly tumbling into other forms, through all of which he saw the faces of his mother and sister in every direction. Then he thought how happy he should be if the door opened, and they came unexpectedly to see him, or Clara appeared out of the wall, like the fairy ladies who always befriended youngest sons. How odd it was that he never cared much about talking to her at home ! And now he would have given all the contents of his box to have seen her, if only for one minute ; nay, Mrs. Chicksand and

Lisbeth would have been welcome visitors, although he had only left them two hours.

The time passed on, and nobody came near him. When the cinders failed to interest him, he walked to the window; but the court looked so dreary, and the grim carved head over the front-door, which was at right-angles with the window, so stern and unfeeling, that he took possession once more of his box. Then it began to get dark; the shadow of the mantelpiece showed itself upon the ceiling; and a man came and lighted a solitary gas-lamp before the door, which looked like a beacon in a desert. At last his spirits broke down, and he began to cry; until finally, resting his cheek against the wainscot at the side of the fireplace, he went fast asleep, and dreamt he was at home.

According to the venerable woodcuts which form the frontispieces to Primers of the dark ages, the paths of learning run through teeming orchards, in which apples predominate; and pleasant pastures agreeably diversified, and peopled by joyous hoop-trundlers and kite-flyers, in long hair and knee-breeches. If such be the case, what a pity it is that thorns and brambles are allowed, apparently by design, to be planted on every portion of the road, causing so much inquietude to the young traveller, and making him look back upon his journey, when achieved, with anything but pleasurable recollections, or gratitude for the opportunity of accomplishing it.

But possibly all this is right and proper, or it would long ago have been altered. At all events, the change would be last grafted on those ancient and time-honoured foundations, where the spirits of the gentle are crushed and broken, or hardened in self-defence, by the overbearing tyranny of those who should be their associates; where the worst dispositions of the bully and school despot are ministered unto and fostered by licensed opportunities; where every sacred feeling of home and affection is jeered at and despised; and the acquirement of one or two defunct, and comparatively useless tongues, — and these alone, — so ill befits the pupil for his future social career, and almost brings him to envy his fellow charity scholars in eleemo-

synary garb, the education they pick up from their own institution in the adjoining church alley.

CHAP. IX.

MR. GLENALVON FOGG'S DRAMA IS REHEARSED.

"BEHOLD, how brightly breaks the morning!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg, dramatic author, as he drew back the curtain of faded moreen that hung across the window, and allowed the sun's rays to fall upon a spirited portrait of the only representative of the British seaman, as he appeared when he apostrophized his dear eyes, and made six land-sharks belay who were insulting an unprotected woman.

"Finer than I expected from the fog on the river as I crossed the bridge last night," answered Vincent. "I wonder how the sun can find his way into this place, amongst all those chimney-pots."

"The sun that would not shine as brightly into the humble roof of the industrious artisan as into the gilded halls of the monarch, is unworthy the name of a man, and — no, I don't mean that. How have you passed the night?" inquired the author.

"Oh, very well, I believe," said Vincent unconcernedly, as a matter of course.

"So have I," continued Mr. Fogg. "I had a vision that I was dwelling in marble halls."

"You must have found them very cold at this time of the year," replied his companion.

Mr. Fogg deigned not to reply to this remark, but proceeded to despatch his breakfast; which he did with the customary appetite attendant upon genius.

The "run" of the pantomime had finished, and, in consequence, the engagement of Vincent as a supernumery had come to a termination with it; but he still remained with his patron, for Mr. Fogg found him of great service. His knowledge of nautical affairs suggested to the author many startling situations for ends of acts; he

also enabled Mr. Fogg to bring them about properly ; and as the small sum he had brought to town with him, together with part of his salary, was not quite exhausted, he did not put his host to any extra expense for maintenance. Besides, Mr. Fogg had shadowed forth dim probabilities of procuring him other employment, in a literary point of view, before many more days had passed.

Mr. Fogg, by virtue of his calling, was ever on the hunt for character, and he studied Vincent's closely ; but it was too unsettled to turn to any dramatic account. Young Scattergood seldom spoke of his family, scarcely ever of his wish to know where they were located, or to see them ; and this betrayed something of a heartless disposition. Yet, occasionally, touches of a better nature would gleam forth, which were evidences of many good points in his temper of mind, warped, perhaps, and blunted by the manner in which he had been brought up. He was generous, certainly. He did not appear anxious at any time to annoy others, or give pain ; and in many instances he had exhibited a nice sense of honour. And yet, with all this, his idle recklessness and careless apathy as to what he was doing, or what became of him, so long as he just supported himself, was likely, favoured by circumstances, to lead him into evils far greater than would have been likely to accrue from a negative condition of his honour or good feeling.

It was the morn of an important day, big with the destinies of Glenalvon Fogg. The production of his drama had been delayed some little time beyond his expectations, in consequence of the performances continuing to prove sufficiently attractive without being changed : but now the treasury of the theatre gave forth an account each night less than the preceding one, and "continued novelty" was decided upon by the management. And so the last rehearsal was called, and the first representation announced for that evening.

It was a marvellous production, this new drama of Mr. Fogg's. The heroine, who had a good part, called it "a stupendous piece." The supernumeraries, possibly

looking only to the manner in which its wonderful action and situations perfectly obliterated all the cerebral functions of conjecture, simply christened it "a stunner."

The drama was called "The Lee Shore of Life; or the Main Truck of Happiness;" and was pronounced very effective, and "safe to go." The plot could not be very easily explained. In fact, it was modelled upon the same school as the railway to the antipodes formerly projected, which, to obviate the discomfort of the passengers coming out feet foremost at the other side of the world, was to hurry them so that they were not to have the slightest idea whether they were upon their heads or their heels. So, in the present case, intense interest, and appalling situations, followed each other with such rapidity, that nobody had time to inquire what they were about, or what end they were to answer; which construction the experience of the present day proves to be an excellent plan to go upon, either in dramatic or general literature.

Amongst the characters of the piece, the father, Michael Cottage, "a reduced hay-maker, and one of Nature's aristocracy," had several beautiful passages to deliver; especially where he called his employer "the proud lord, who trampled on that soil which the English peasant loved to cherish." And when this proud lord endeavoured to undermine the affections of Rose Cottage, who was too virtuous to go wrong in the slightest degree, being also in love with Tom Ratline, the nautical hero of the piece, the honest agricultural indignation of the father was absolutely terrific, as he spoke of "the furrows on his cheeks, the harrow at his heart, the noble but profligate rake, ploughing up his bosom, and sowing the seeds of misery in a happy home, a contented, though an 'umble one." Then, by the vile contrivances of the proud lord, the true lover had to go to sea, and at the close of the act informed the audience "that blue-peter was flying at the fore," and was pushed off in a boat upon wheels, waving his hat, and hoping that some friendly ball might lay him low.

In the second act, Tom Ratline was stated by the bills of the day to be "on the blue waters" somewhere a great

way off, whereby, as none of the audience knew anything about the manners and customs of the localities, more freedom was given to the fancies of the dramatist. And here he fought natives, and captured buccaneers, and took pirates' strongholds without end; at the same time shivering his timbers so very often that it was a marvel anything beyond splinters of them, wherever they were, ultimately remained.

In the third act, he returned home with a large purse and a small bundle; and providentially arrived the identical night upon which the proud lord had paid a smuggler, Dark Somebody, to carry off Rose Cottage. This led to an awful combat between the smuggler and the sailor, ending in the death of the former, who let out the secret that Tom was heir to the proud lord's estate, having been stolen by him when an infant; and then he saw unpleasant fiends, who came to bear him off to eternal torments. Rose, who remained constant, gave her hand where she could give her heart; the proud lord left the neighbourhood in disgust; and the piece concluded with the reward of virtue, and the information publicly conveyed to the audience, "that although vice may flourish for a time, yet the true tar nails the union-jack to his figure-head, and clasps the lass that loves a sailor to his heart of oak."

There was, also, a comic cobbler in the piece, with his sweetheart, Peggy Buttercup, who got perpetually jealous. And a murder was introduced in the third act, where the interest was felt to flag; but this last affair was more an episode than part of the plot, except in the great risk which Tom ran of being taken up as the assassin.

Vincent accompanied Mr. Fogg to the theatre, as well from having nothing to do, as in the hope of procuring something. The call of the prompter, which summoned "all the ladies and gents" at half-past ten, had been attended to, and the members of the *corps* were standing about the stage in groups, shawled and coated, and all looking very cold. A table and chair were placed at one edge of the scene, together with a pen and ink, or rather mysterious articles used by the prompter, bearing a slight resemblance thereunto. The leader was shivering in the

middle of the orchestra, exactly in his own light, which streamed in one long dusty ray from the back of the gallery over the sweepers, who were clearing away the orange-peel ; and, violin in hand, was arranging what he termed the "meloses," — the little bits of incidental music to come in when anything interesting took place. As the play was to be produced that night, of course none of the scenery was finished ; so the stage was fitted up with half a drawing-room flat, and half a smuggler's haunt, with a ship's bulwark and cannons running across the front, and a grassy bank at the prompt entrance, which looked very like a portable bath in a green petticoat.

Mr. Potter, the stage-manager, was standing with his back to the foot-lamps, talking to everybody at once, now shouting up into the flies, now bawling down to the men under the stage, next rowing the leader, then directing the *tableaux*, and every spare moment hurrying Mr. Traps, the property-man, who kept appearing with wonderful articles to be used in the piece, of every description, apparently made from old handboxes painted over.

"Good morning, Mr. Fogg," said Mr. Potter hurriedly, as the author entered ; "we are trying that 'set' in the second act once more. Now then," he continued, clapping his hands as a signal, "back to your places. Mr. Poddy, come lower down ; they are all in a heap. Mr. Jones, more to the right, — a little more still — not so much — that will do. Recollect you are on the look-out for the schooner. Harris, Croby, F. Croby, and Smith, be ready with the shaking-sea behind the second entrance as soon as the scene opens. No, *no*, no ! What the devil are you there for, Mr. Howard ? You must not be discovered until the boarders enter. Now, Mr. Dilk, if you please. What's the cue, Mr. Groove ?"

"A rough night of it," answered the prompter.

Mr. Dilk put his hands into the pocket of his wrapper, and leaning indolently against part of the proscenium, exclaimed in a careless, hurried manner, with great *nonchalance*, and with an utter disregard of any stops or emphasis,

"She walks the waters like a blazing cloud. Ha! a flash! damnation! our bowsprit's flying in the breeze! up with the black flag; run out the guns! Brandon, Maltravers, Wilson, to your posts, and fight like tigers! death or victory!"

"Report of a gun, I think, Mr. Groove, after 'blazing cloud,'" observed Mr. Fogg.

"Quite right, sir," returned the prompter, making a note of the occurrence, to be executed at night upon the fine sheep-skin ordnance, like a Brobdignagian tambourine which hung over his box.

"Silence, ladies, if you please," exclaimed Mr. Potter; "if you would only talk half as loud when you are wanted to, as you do now, it would be much better for everybody."

"I beg your pardon," said Vincent, speaking just as Mr. Dilk was going on again; "but is not the pirate supposed to be chased by another vessel?"

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Potter sternly, as much as to say, "What the devil have you to do with it?"

"Well, then; I don't very well see how his bowsprit can be hurt by a gun from the schooner."

"Where would it be, then, sir?" asked Mr. Potter, perfectly astonished at a supernumerary giving so cool an opinion. "I believe Mr. Fogg knows a *little* of nautical business; perhaps you can teach him still better. Pray, where would it be, I ask again?"

"Where you would most probably be wounded when you went into action," answered Vincent, with a little sarcasm, at which "all the ladies and gents" tittered, and the prompter tried to mend his pen with a chisel, that was lying amongst some carpenter's tools at his side.

"Mr. Scattergood is not far from the mark," observed Mr. Fogg.

"What do you mean, sir?" said Mr. Potter, very angry; and, although surprised at the freedom of a super, was still more astonished to hear such a person as an author speaking his mind in a theatre.

"I did not allude to yourself, Mr. Potter," replied Mr.

Fogg, with humility. "But, of course, the gun would not hit the prow; be good enough to substitute stern for bowsprit, Mr. Dilk."

"Taffrail's better," remarked Vincent, shortly.

"Taffrail's a good word," continued Mr. Fogg; "mark that down, if you please, Mr. Groove. 'Her taffrail's flying in the breeze.'"

"Who runs the schooner on to the pirate?" asked the stage-manager.

"I do, sir," said a diminutive scene-shifter, in a paper cap.

"Go a-head, then," answered Mr. Potter; "we sha n't have finished when the doors open. Hallo, there, Jackson!" and he shouted up to the flies; "send down the schooner, if Mr. Brush has finished it."

"Look out below!" said a voice in return, as a profile ship, or rather the bows of one, was slung down from the clouds, and taken to its place.

Mr. Fokesel, the delineator of the British tar, now leaped down from the schooner on to the deck of the pirate, and commanded Mr. Dilk to avast. He was habited in a white coat of by-gone fashion, with a little cape, and did not look much like a sailor, in his private dress.

Mr. Dilk, who did not seem at all inclined to avast, although ordered to do so with great force, answered in the same quiet and unconcerned manner:—

"Never! the child of ocean loves the dark-blue waters; dare to advance another step, and a trusty comrade fires the magazine, and blows us altogether to perdition."

"Surrender!" said Mr. Fokesel, in mild tones, almost confidential.

"Never!" replied Mr. Dilk, with the same *sang froid*, as he quietly took his hands out of his pockets, and walked towards Mr. Fokesel.

"Never," uttered with great emphasis, is generally the signal for a combat, especially when it follows such phrases as "Villain! release that lady!"—"Let go your hold, I tell you!"—"Yield, miscreant!" or any other energetic command that the other party does not see the urgent

necessity of complying with. A combat was therefore now coming on, and Messrs. Dilk and Fokesel commenced rehearsing it.

It was not, however, very dreadful to look at, although it was to come out uncommonly strong at night. Both the gentlemen had walking-sticks — the majority of actors at minor theatres incline to them, and affect their use, — and these supplied the place of other weapons. Mr. Dilk put his left hand back again into his pocket, as it was rather cold, and then began to fight.

"Now, then, Fokesel," he exclaimed, as they crossed their sticks very quietly, as though they were fearful of injuring them. "One — two — three — under; one — two — three — over: that's it. Go on, and now come over here."

"Robber's cut, I think, here," replied the other, counting up to twelve. "Now — *primes* — that's it — sixes."

"Guarded thrusts all across the stage, and back. We had better try it over again to the music."

The leader took his violin, and the fearful struggle was repeated to the ennobling solo, in the same subdued and gentlemanly manner. When finished, it was pronounced likely to prove very effective, in which opinion the author and the combatants so exactly coincided, that they partook of a hard biscuit and a glass of brandy-and-water together, to evince their mutual satisfaction.

"Now we want somebody to hang from the rope, and be shot down by Mr. Dilk."

"I can do that," said Mr. Dilk eagerly.

"No; you have your celebrated fall in the third act," said Mr. Fogg. "Besides, how can you shoot yourself down? I think Mr. Scattergood is the man to do it. Can you hang, my friend?"

"A can hang to anything," said Vincent.

"I have no doubt you can," observed Mr. Potter (who had not forgotten the sarcasm) with great meaning, looking at the prompter, as much as to say, "I think I had him there — rather."

Nevertheless, Vincent was very valuable upon the pre-

sent emergency, and he was forthwith engaged again on the instant. And then he proceeded to rehearse the business of the situation, and led the boarders from the schooner, which was done by getting up a pair of steps behind it, and leaping down in front.

The boarders were a remarkably curious band. From their general physiognomy, they might have been considered half-boarders; and, as they now came down one after another, there certainly was not much in their appearance calculated to appal the pirate; for they were men of mild deportment, arrayed in modest costume: the dark Berlin gloves with the ventilating fingers, and ill-conditioned wrapper, that had seen much worldly buffeting and trouble, as well as days gone by, pronounced superior to the present, were theirs. Theirs, in social life, was the go of gin and mystic screw, whose deep enigma they alone could solve; to them did the wardrobe adjudge its oldest russet-boots and strangest-waisted tunics for their histrionic existence; for their refreshment, in particular, were the gilded claret-jugs and *papier machée* apples provided at the banquets; for on apples and gilded claret-jugs alone do stage-guests at mighty festivals revel and make merry.

At last, after four or five hours' waiting about on the cold stage, repeating, altering, cutting, and interpolating—knocking up “carpenter’s scenes,” where there was scarcely time to arrange everything behind for the change,—making sure that the raging billows were in good order,—grouping the grand situations,—sinking the ship to Davy Jones’s locker, which was the dry, well-lighted under-floor of the stage; after all this, the rehearsal came to a conclusion, and the different performers were agreed to be as tolerably perfect as is usual upon the average of first representations.

It was Monday evening, sacred to the pits and galleries of transpontine theatres. Mr. Fogg, as he left the house with Vincent, observed that knots of holiday-makers were already collecting round the doors, to wait for front places attendant upon their patience. He scanned their faces with a critical eye; for upon their verdict did the fate of his

drama depend. They looked good-tempered, and he rejoiced.

"A month's run as a first piece, and a fortnight at half-price," said Mr. Fogg, "would benefit both my reputation and my coffers. At present, my purse is trash."

"I have also got an interest in its success, now I am engaged again," returned Vincent, as he accompanied his patron towards a modest eating-house; for they had not time to go home.

"The dilemma was fortunate for you," said the author; "but I am sorry you upset Mr. Potter. You may be certain he will get rid of you as soon as he can do so, plausibly. What shall you do then?"

"Trust to chance," replied Vincent. "At present I am Fortune's shuttlecock."

CHAP. X.

THE FIRST DAY AT MERCHANT TAILORS'.

FREDERICK slumbered away his sorrows, until his three or four fellow-pupils returned from school; and then he was aroused somewhat suddenly by a volley of caps discharged simultaneously at his head. He started up, and was greeted by a loud laugh from his future companions.

"How do you do, sir?" said one of them, with much politeness, making a low bow. "I'm afraid we have disturbed you."

"Who are you?" asked the second; the new fellow that Snap expected?"

"Frederick Scattergood," returned the pupil, much alarmed.

"My Jove! won't you find him a trimmer, that's all?" continued the other.

"You'll take cold, my man," said the biggest of the party, picking up an old hat, and putting it on Freddy's

head. "What a nice little boy!" he continued, giving it a thump on the crown, and knocking it down over his eyes.

"Oh! leave him alone, Gogsley," cried the first speaker, with affected commiseration. "He's a little mammy-sick at present. You want to go home, love, don't you, to dear mamma?" he continued, pulling the hat from his eyes, and kicking it across the room.

"Hold up your head like a man," cried Gogsley, seizing hold of Frederick's hair, and pulling him back by it, as though he would have torn out a handful. "Let's see what you're like."

"You hurt me very much," cried Frederick, under the torture. "Please, sir, leave go my hair."

"What will you give me to let go, then?" said his tormentor.

"Anything you like, sir, that's in my box," replied the little fellow, very meekly.

"And where is your box?"

"I'm sitting on it," was the answer.

"Well, get off it, then," exclaimed Gogsley, pushing him off upon the ground. "Now, you fellows, cribby first choose, and feign smuggings."

They lifted the box on to the table, and then made Frederick, who was beginning to cry very piteously, open the lock. The first thing they saw was the accordion, which Mr. Bodle had given him, and which Gogsley directly seized on, holding up at arm's length, and shouting out,

"*Quis ?*"

"*Ego !*" cried the other three all at once.

"Yours, Plunkett," he exclaimed, handing it over to a genteel-looking youth, in broad lay-down collars, who directly commenced a very rapid fantasia upon it, introducing no particular air, which terminated in putting several of the notes entirely *hors de combat*.

The cake was the next object of attraction, with its fortress of jam on the top. Gogsley thrust his finger through the paper covering, and, when he had discovered what it

was, appropriated it to himself, by carrying it to his locker ; whilst another boy, named Marston, pulled out the cake, and tossed it up to the ceiling, catching it like a ball as it descended.

“ Who made this cake ? Is it good ? ” asked Marston.

“ Clara—she’s my sister,” returned Frederick.

This reply immediately gave rise to a series of questions from all the others as to how old Clara was, what she was like, if she was pretty, what colour her eyes were, when she would call to see him, and which of them he thought she would fall in love with ; all which inquiries Frederick answered to the best of his ability, consistent with his endeavours to avoid giving offence to any of them.

At six o’clock five large cups of a very remarkable infusion, humorously called tea, the first pleasantry that any one of a jocular disposition would have detected in the proceedings of the establishment, were brought up for their refection. The scholars were provided with tea, to impress them with a proper notion of the importance of the noble institution they were members of, as contra-distinguished to the plebeian milk and water of common academies. There were also some substantial slices of bread, with thin veneers of butter on their surface, which were mainly instrumental in the disappearance of Frederick’s jam, of which he never partook ; for his spirits were too low and broken to allow him to eat.

As soon as this meal had finished, the others took very little more notice of him, but left him sitting by the fire, whilst they began their exercises for the following day ; varying their studies by incidental combats relative to the proximity of the candle, which Gogsley insisted upon having close to himself. For Gogsley had an imposition, —an hundred lines of the first *Æneid* to transcribe, —which he informed Freddy would be his especial task in future, but that at present he was too great a fool to undertake it.

All this went on with little variation until about half-past eight, when they were told it was time to go to rest. Frederick found that he was to share his bed with Plunkett,

which somewhat comforted him, as he was more quiet and civil in his manner than Gogsley ; for Gogsley was, in every sense of the word, a bully. He was idle, overgrown, and ignorant. He delighted to inflict punishment with knotted handkerchiefs and the buckle ends of straps, or with his fists upon the twisted arms of his victims, hectoring over all those who were too mild or defenceless to resist or to attack him again, and cringing, in an equal degree, to those who were his superiors in brute strength alone ; for in intellect nearly all surpassed him.

There were three cheerless beds in the attic, to which the boys now ascended. Beyond these, the room boasted little more furniture than the one below. Freddy felt very miserable, and quite worn out ; he undressed quickly, and was getting into bed, when Gogsley told him that he must wait until the last, and put out the candle. And, as that amiable young gentleman did not hurry himself, the new pupil remained for a quarter of an hour shivering in the cold, perched on the top of his clothes-trunk at the foot of his bed, and embracing his knees, in the attitude of little boys on the bank of a river, inquiring how warm the water was, whilst their trembling companions, already immersed, and scarcely able to speak for frigidity, gasp out, " B-b-beautiful ! "

" Halloo, Plunkett, you've caught it to-day. How did you like it ? " said one of the others, named Jollit, a small boy with a large head, who was constantly talking of what his brother Joe could do.

" What's that to you, Cashbox ? " was the reply.

This sobriquet was applied to Jollit, because his friends were in trade in the city. The others were sons of gentlemen.

" I don't care for that, nor as much again," continued Plunkett, looking over his shoulder at two livid weals that sloped across it. " By Jove ! wasn't Rasper in a rage ! He split his cane right up."

" Would you sooner have a licking or an impo' ? " asked another.

" A licking, I should think," said Plunkett ; " that's

soon over ; but an impo' may keep you in all the evening. There's two hundred lines knocked into two. I don't care for the cane a bit."

And he laughed as he regarded the blue stripes across his back.

" You're quite hardened to it," said Gogsley. " Your hide's as tough as a donkey's, from constant thwacks."

" I wish mine was," said Jollit. " He hurt me jolly yesterday, and made my hand bleed, breaking a chilblain. Isn't that bad ? "

" Serves you right," said Gogsley. " Gentlemen never have chilblains.—Now, you new boy, shove out the light."

Frederick put out the candle, and got into bed, contriving, after a little tearful rumination, to go to sleep, even on the nine inches of space, half-sacking, half-mattress, to which Plunkett drove him. Had he been chummed upon any of the others, Gogsley would have doubled them up in the bedstead, which was a turn-up one ; but Plunkett's arm was rather powerful, strong enough to enable him to vindicate the truth of his favourite declaration, that he never stood any nonsense. So the tormentor thought it best not to put this piece of practical humour into action upon the present occasion.

The next morning broke cold and dark. The light came creeping through the windows, as though some magic power had changed the panes of glass to a dirty orange colour during the night. Without, there was a dense city fog, so thick and dismal, that the chimes of the nearest church in Thames Street could hardly get through it, but fought for every inch of murky atmosphere, and hung upon its ropy volumes as if they had been a part and parcel of it.

The boys appeared to awake by common consent all at the same moment, and then grumblingly turned out of bed. Gogsley was the last, because he waited until he had made Frederick spread his counterpane upon the floor for him to stand upon whilst he dressed ; for there was not a trace of carpeting in the room, not even a slip at the side of the beds.

"There's no water again in the jugs," said Plunkett. "Whose turn is it to go down after some?"

"Oh, the new fellow's, of course," said Gogsley. "Now, young one, look alive, and cut down to the kitchen. Take both the jugs."

"I don't know where to go, sir," answered Fred.

"You'll find out fast enough," replied the bully; "or, if you don't, I'll teach you. Follow your nose down stairs. Now—what are you waiting for? Do you want to be started?"

Frederick would have said that he had no slippers, and they had left their shoes down stairs to be blacked; but Gogsley began to twist a towel to "flick" him with, as he termed it; so the young scholar hurried out of the room, and pattered with his naked feet down the cold stone stairs.

It was nearly dark in the kitchen, and the servants had not risen. As he timidly pushed open the door, a huge cat sprang from the dresser, and rushed past him, knocking down a glass jug in her progress, and breaking it to atoms; and one or two dissipated black beetles, who had been keeping festival all night, scuffled off to their holes, running over his feet in their anxious hurry at being caught upon the loose at such an advanced hour. But the dread of punishment up stairs overcame his fright at these visitants, and he filled his jugs at the cistern, and crept back again, cold and wretched, but not sorry to escape from the close mingled odour of sulphurous vapour and small beer, which kitchens generally give forth at these untimely periods of the morning.

The toilets did not occupy much time, and in another quarter of an hour they left Mr. Snap's house for the school. Fires were gleaming down some of the areas in the court, and forges on the bottom floors of the Thames-street warehouses blazed ruddy and bright in the cold dark morning. How comfortable the workmen looked! How Frederick envied the very servants he saw through the windows, and almost wished that he was one of them.

As they plunged deep into the narrow thoroughfare, the fog appeared condensed in proportion. The street-lamps,

which were still burning, changed from the vivid jet of flame into large, dull masses of reddish light; and the rumbling of wheels, and oaths of sable coalheavers; the lurid gleams streaming across the road at various openings, and the long descending passages to places lost in gloom and distance, altogether formed a very fair representation of what the entrance to the infernal regions is described to be by those poets of lively imagination who have been there.

"There!" said Gogsley suddenly, after a rapid examination of his strap of books and pockets, "I have left my imposition behind me."

"Then I wouldn't be in your boots," said Plunkett, "although they are real Wellingtons. You must look sharp if you want to save prayers."

"Here, new fellow! Scatterbrains! — what's your name?" cried Gogsley, turning to Fred. "You must go back after it."

Frederick in vain pleaded ignorance of the way. Gogsley promised to mark a map of it on his shoulders with his strap if he did not start immediately, so he was compelled to go back.

He was some time finding out the house. He turned up a wrong lane, and got into a labyrinth of lofty woolstores and warehouses, where everybody appeared too busy to answer his inquiries. At last, he came by chance to a dismal churchyard, that he recollected passing, one enormous reeking dead-pit, whose limits bulged out with repletion, and over which the gravestones rose up in the gloom, like the ghosts of those beneath, waiting for the real light of morning to drive them back again to their foul tenements. Guided by this spot, he reached the entrance of the court, and got to Mr. Snap's door. Here there was another delay of some minutes, until the servants came down; and then more time was consumed in looking after the imposition in Gogsley's locker, where at length they found it, and he started off again.

A clock struck the quarters as he left the house. Once — twice — thrice — four times! It was eight o'clock, and

he would be late at the school. He set off running as fast as he could, and following the road to the best of his recollection, was scarcely three minutes in reaching Merchant Tailors'.

The great door was open, and he went quickly up the staircase. Here there was little doubt about where to go, the only other place he could get to being the gloomy cloisters. But everything was quite quiet; so different to what he expected it would be in such a large school. When he got to the landing, he found the door shut; but, peeping through a hole hacked with a knife, he could see a vast hall, lined on each side by boys standing up, and holding lighted tapers, and in the middle, one was kneeling down upon one knee, reading prayers. In about a minute the door was opened.

"What's your name?" said one of the scholars, who was standing at the door.

Frederick told him, with great respect.

"That will do," said the other, writing it down.

"Am I too late, sir?" asked the little fellow timidly.

"Don't you see you are?" said the other. "You will not be thrashed until after breakfast this morning."

Before Freddy could recover from the fright into which this announcement threw him, Gogsley came up for his imposition; and then told him to sit on the first form.

"I am going to be beaten, sir," said Frederick, as he gave him the papers.

"Then you ought to have been quicker," said Gogsley.

"Never mind; you will be bumped against the new boys' pillar in the cloisters at breakfast time, and that will prepare you for it."

The classes were here called up, and Frederick was left by himself, in great distress, at the end of the form.

CHAP. XI.

MR. BOLT APPEARS ANXIOUS TO VISIT AN OLD COUNTRY
HOUSE.—THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

WE have occasionally seen certain plays of very wonderful construction, whose ingenuity even Mr. Glenalvon Fogg might have envied, in which the events that were going on in different parts of the house, in two, three, or even four rooms, were represented before the audience all at once. On these occasions, the scene usually resembled a gigantic doll's house, with the street-door open, which in those tenements is generally of formidable proportions, inasmuch as it comprises the whole front of the building, leaving the house, when unclosed, in that state of unreserved display respecting its internal economy, which we only see where violent architectural sections of dwellings are being made to form new streets in dense neighbourhoods. And then there is very great food for speculation in the different colours and patterns of the paper; the outline apparitions of departed staircases, that still haunt the walls; and the rusty grates still clinging to the fireplace, like household gods perched up aloft in niches.

The staircases have, however, but little to do with dolls' houses; they are an accommodation never thought of by the builders of those tiny freeholds; nor, possibly, would they be much used if constructed, the chief resident inmate being a wax lodger, who sleeps perpetually in a small bed, tightly trimmed with pink calico, and is found by children of an inquiring disposition to be entirely without legs. And when it has been ordained that the small Dutch company which assembles in the kitchen should hold a reunion in the drawing-room, like house-lamb and alien babies, they are usually brought up by hand. So that, since even the labours of that wondrous architect, the bee, prove economy of space and material to be the first considerations in building, the makers of dolls' abodes may, upon the whole, be regarded as clear-headed and talented

men, from the formation of "savings' banks" upwards, to those elaborate four-roomed houses, which Lilliputian upholsterers undertake to furnish luxuriously for two-and-sixpence.

If his simultaneous presentation of different actions could be effected as well in novels or histories as on the stage, a great economy of time, and possibly a diminution of tedium, might be the result. Doubtless, with a little practice, two chapters could be studied at once, similarly as pianists embrace the meaning of the two clefs at one and the same time. But as the large proportion of readers have not paid much attention to this comprehensive method, we must at present go on in the old-fashioned style, which, like many other antique notions, is perhaps the best after all.

Vincent is, as we are aware, still located with Mr. Fogg. How long the fellowship will continue may not yet be told. Freddy is a scholar of Merchant Tailors': the duration of his stay there is equally uncertain. Unscreened allotments, portioned off from the mysterious coal-stores of Mr. Chick-sand at sixpence the scuttle, shed warmth around the lodgings of Clara and her parents. And so we will wind off another end from the web which surrounds the cocoon of our history, until we get the various threads into one line for its conclusion.

The time is yet winter; the place not very far from the locality wherein we first met our hero journeying up to London in the market-waggon. That dismal and swampy range stretched along the banks of the river for miles; but in its inland direction was more circumscribed; for there it gradually became cultivated; the willows disappeared, and trees of less melancholy aspect, upon whom the effects of constant water-drinking had not left such a dull, depressed physiognomy, took their places. Dry turf, too, with underwood and hawthorn, supplanted the plashy fields of rushes; and the numerous water-courses, that intersected the marshes in every direction, were seen no more. And still farther from the coast were knolls of ground — warm, sunny rises, upon which the corn undulated in summer time; with clumps of goodly trees, and long belts of

waving foliage, which at various openings disclosed fine old houses, high and dry upon the headland, whose windows, it could be readily imagined, commanded views far over the marshes and river, even to the sweeping outline of rich hill and valley, that adorned the opposite and pleasant county of Kent.

There was one old mansion, above others, in which we are chiefly interested. As the traveller caught the first view of it over the grove that lodged the cawing rooks who were its perpetual sentinels, it appeared nothing but a wonderful collection of chimneys in every fashion, from the early Tudor to that of the latest century ; and when he got nearer, its windows were a perfect marvel, as well from their number as their quaintness.

There were large bay ones, which were known at once to belong to "the hall," with heavy stone mullions and carved transoms, so large indeed, that the recess which they formed was a perfect room of itself, with one entire side of glass,—not smooth, clear plate, but small dusky panes, full of flaws and zigzags, latticed into all sorts of fantasies, and topped by unintelligible coats of arms, which the sun caused to march in solemn illuminated procession along the matting of the floor every day he shone. And high up, in sly nooks and corners, were windows much smaller, so oddly situated under the eaves of the numerous gables, that you wondered what on earth could be their utility as regarded lighting any practicable and approachable apartment. But they were windows of great humour for all that, and seemed to enjoy mightily the joke of their position ; for when the wind blew hard, and the sunlight fell upon them, they winked and twinkled so merrily, that you only felt annoyed you could not enter into their fun. There were other small windows low down, almost level with the ground ; but they were sullen and suspicious : the very inhabitants of the house could not find out what they had been built for, except for the special enlightenment of the family rats who lived behind the wainscots ; for they let in the day to nothing else.

The architecture of the house was after many styles and

tastes. Unity had been sacrificed to convenience, and the different proprietors had pulled one room down, or built up another, as suited their fancy, until it was difficult to tell which was supposed to be the chief front of the house, until the fine porch was discovered, with its old and massy door, fitted into a low, deep arch of crumbling stone, and studded with iron nails. And was there not a keyhole too?—slightly,—with its rusty gigantic iron scutcheon. No one ever saw one like it out of a pantomime, or the prevalent idea that fairies usually choose that entrance for coming into a house, would not seem so great a stretch of the imagination after all, even supposing them to be as big as ordinary mortals. But all this singularity only made Brabants, for so was the house called, more picturesque and venerable. Even the sun seemed to respect it, and his warmest beams always lingered with something of fondness round the old grey structure, long after the surrounding coppices were wrapped in shade.

About a quarter of a mile from this house—the spire of the modest church could be seen peeping above the intervening shaw—there was a small village; such a quiet, secluded place. It consisted only of one street, and this was but a part of the road which ran from some unimportant spot to nowhere in particular. Indeed, its existence as a road, with a continuation either way, might have been doubted, had not carts occasionally made their appearance in the village, which must evidently have arrived by that *route*; for when the inhabitants wished to visit adjacent towns, they chose wonderfully obscure footpaths, which ran through fields, pleasant in summer, with fresh green turf and hedge-flowers, and, when near the village, resounding with the merry voices of children at play. For children ever love the fields, their feelings are closely allied to nature, and they like to commune with her, although they understand not why. Men seek the fields for tranquillity, or a change from pent-up worldliness; but children look upon each wild flower as a play-fellow. They will talk to the yellow petals of the cowslip as they string them into chains.

The snow had not yet gone, however, at the present time. The solemn wintry twilight was creeping over Brabants, and the surrounding copses, now dark and leafless ; whilst the ruddy light of fires within gleamed from its various windows ; and now and then sparks shot up from the fantastic chimneys, in evidence of the huge billets that were blazing upon the iron " dogs " of the hearth. At one of the gates belonging to the homestall at the back of the house, two men were leaning against the palings, and talking to each other in low cautious tones. One of them had the appearance of a labourer about the farm ; the other was Mr. Cricket, or Bolt, as he gave his true name, with whom we last parted on the night of Vincent's arrival in Covent Garden.

" I tell you they're as safe as if you had them at your own place in London," said the man. " No one goes to that shed but myself, and the snow this morning covered everything over as smooth as glass. How long is 'em to lie thus ? "

" Till the waggon goes up again—mayhap three days," replied Bolt. " It was the best run we ever made, and it would be a pity to lose it. How's the guv'nor ?—dark ? "

" All right there," returned the other. " He'd pretty soon let us know if it wasn't. Only I think the sooner you take them off the better. His nephew is coming here to stay in a week, and he'll want the place for his dogs."

" Why, he hasn't been gone three months."

" No ; but they do say he comes to keep company with Miss Amy ; leastwise, so I hear in the kitchen. It's no go, though,—I could tell him that, much as the old gent would like it."

" How 's that ? " asked Bolt carelessly.

" 'Cause there's somebody else. Master 's got money—not much, I know, but still he's got some—so 's t'other, and I reckon he wants to keep all the eggs in one basket, as the saying is. He won't."

" How do you mean ? "

" Why, I know she was in love with young—what's his name ?—there, that lived in the village, and went to

sea. I used to see them often out together, when they never knowed nothing about it."

"I suppose it don't make much difference to us two whether she has both or neither," observed Bolt, "provided they don't open their eyes too much about the estate when they come into it. I reckon you wouldn't like the pheasants to be counted."

"He'll be in luck, whoever it is," resumed the man, taking no heed of Mr. Bolt's insinuation. "There's silver waiters as big as cart-wheels, and spoons like spades, with no end of 'em neither."

"Where are they?" inquired Bolt.

"Ah! you'd like to know, now; wouldn't you?" said his companion. "A cargo of them would pay better than sperrits."

"Now, look here, Chandler," said Bolt, meaningly; "there's no mistake but we could transport one another, if we was inclined so to do. Anything you tells me is—so!"

And he pantomimically expressed the word he intended to be understood by clapping his hand against his open mouth; adding directly afterwards,

"So there's no use in concealing—nohow. Only let us know when there's a chance of anything to be sacked, and you shall have your rights, just and honest. Eh?"

"It ain't hanging matter, if it was found out," observed Chandler, apparently meditating out aloud.

"How can it be found out?" replied Bolt. "Once get the things to London, and half an hour will settle their business. I've know'd worse-looking schemes than this."

"Like enough—like enough," answered the other, lifting up a pail at his side. "I suppose you'll be down at The Billet this evening. There's a pig to be raffled for."

"You'll see me, if nothing turns up," said Bolt, as he opened the gate, and left the yard. "Don't forget, you know—not a word."

Chandler winked in acquiescence, and carried his burden towards the house; whilst Bolt strode off across the fields, crushing the snow beneath his heavy shoes as he whistled

an accompaniment, and was soon out of sight in the increasing darkness.

The window of the library at Brabants was the chief point from which the ruddy light broke forth as the day departed. It was a fine old room, with a huge carved chimney-piece, a wainscot of dark oak, and hanging buttresses from every point of the elaborate ceiling; and was usually occupied by the residents as the sitting-room. There was little appearance of splendour or affluence in the appointments of the room. The furniture was mostly old; in many instances its antiquity amounted to dilapidation; and on some of the panels, which enframed pieces of faded and half-indistinct tapestry, the work had burst from its fastening, and disclosed the ruinous state of the wall behind. Neither was the remainder of the house in much better condition. Every portion of it spoke of the inability of the fortune of the owner to maintain the establishment in its proper condition, both internally and externally; from the irregular and rudely-mended park-palings which surrounded the estate, allowing entrance to every depredator who chose to make an inroad upon the gardens or preserves, to the worn and irregular flooring of the hall, over a portion of which more tapestry, dragged down from the upper rooms of the house, was now spread in the ignoble position of a carpet. It was long, too, since the sounds of revelry had filled that old hall. But for its noble hearth and goodly windows, it might have been taken for a barn or granary, if one or two odd pieces of corroded armour, and a few rotting and gloomy banners that drooped from its walls had been removed. And, indeed, the gallery which ran round its upper portion had been partially consecrated to this use, wherein the rats rioted in banquets of repletion. For the fortunes of the house had not yet sunk so low as to give these vermin their mysterious warning that it was time to quit it.

In the library were two persons,—the owner of the house and his daughter; they were the sole occupants of Brabants, for the mother had long slept in the family vault, beneath the worn pavement of the little church before mentioned.

Mr. Grantham was still in the prime of life. He had married young, almost in his minority ; and he had a proud bearing, and quick, perceptive manner, which gave him the appearance of being younger than he really was. Few would have imagined, upon sight only, that he was the father of the handsome girl who now occupied the other side of the fireplace, engaged in embroidering some canvas to cover a *prie-dieu*, one or two specimens of which industry already adorned the chairs of the room, and formed the only exceptions, with their bright and glowing colours, to its general worn-out aspect.

For a time they were both silent, as the fire threw their forms in giant and dancing shadows on the opposite wall. The father was looking intently at the burning log, as though he sought companionship in its fitful blaze, his quick, anxious breathing alone disturbing the quiet ; and his child was pursuing her work with a hurried intensity of application, which proved that it was only serving as a cover to turbulent and anxious thoughts.

"Well, Amy," said Mr. Grantham, after a long pause, "will you favour me with a reply ? I have been some time expecting it."

"I scarcely know what answer you would have me give," replied his daughter timidly, as she looked up for an instant from her work. "I like Herbert. I always did."

"And you would have no objection then, to become his wife, if he felt inclined to pay his addresses to you ?"

A slight and passing tremor shook the girl's frame as she heard these words. She replied,

"I did not mean that, sir. I implore you not to press the subject. I have told you I like my cousin, but I could never marry him."

"You mean, you have made up your mind to refuse a desired and eligible match. Is it not so ?" asked her father sternly. "What can induce you to form this foolish, ill-judged determination ?"

"I do not love him, sir, — at least, as you would have me, 'from my heart.'"

"You would tell me you have a heart," replied Mr

Grantham. "You may have one; but it is cold and insensible as this marble. Amy, why is this?"

"Because my heart must be given, father, to my husband, — I mean, — if ever I were to marry. He shall not purchase it."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Mr. Grantham as he rose from his seat, and paced up and down the room. "This is the idle nonsense of a school-girl. Herbert's family is in every respect equal to our own; his possessions far greater. He is all a girl might wish for."

"I do not deny it," replied his daughter; "but I would not have him entertain a hope that I may become his wife. It can never be."

"Amy, this is absurd," said Mr. Grantham. And, advancing towards her, he fixed his eye keenly on her, as he continued, "There are other reasons for this determination, of which you have kept me in ignorance."

The girl bent timidly before her father's gaze, and replied in a low, tremulous voice,

"I will not deceive you, father: there are."

"I suspected as much," observed Mr. Grantham, as he walked coldly back to his seat. "And, may I ask these reasons? There is another attachment, — is it not so?"

"You have asked me, and I will answer you," replied Amy, as she looked towards him with an earnest and appealing gaze. "I have long struggled with my feelings in silence, until I thought my reason would give way beneath the conflict, for I have no one now in whom I can confide. I have striven to overcome the attachment, but all in vain. I *do* love another. Father! pity me — pity me — I beseech you!"

And rushing towards her father, she threw herself upon her knees at his feet, and burst into a violent flood of tears.

Mr. Grantham had not been prepared for this outbreak of sorrow. He raised his daughter gently, and drawing her towards him, parted her long, dark hair, and kissed her with more affection than he might have been thought capable of exhibiting, from his usual staid bearing.

"My poor girl!" he exclaimed kindly; for Amy's allusion to her lonely position had recalled her mother to his mind, and he was softened by the recollection. "And who is it that you love? Will you not tell me?"

"Do not ask me," replied the weeping girl. "Some day you shall know all. Let me retire now; but do not think from this confession that I shall ever cease to respect or esteem *you*."

She withdrew herself from her father's arms, and, covering her face with her hands, broke into a fresh deluge of tears; and then saluting Mr. Grantham, she retired from the room, and sought her chamber. But for some hours after a light from its fretted casement, glimmering upon the rimy branches of the trees that occasionally swept the window, showed that she had not yet found an asylum from her sorrows in slumber.

CHAP. XII.

"THE LEE SHORE OF LIFE" IS PRODUCED.

"THE Lee Shore of Life" at length underwent the ordeal of public opinion. Soon after the doors of the theatre had opened, and the first rush of the eager multitude, who had been beguiling the last two hours of attendance under the portico by practical jokes and humorous salutations, had subsided, Mr. Glenalvon Fogg meekly entered, and took his place in a dark corner on a back seat of the upper boxes. He passed unobserved; no one unacquainted with the mysteries of literature would have imagined that an author so much resembled an everyday man. And then, shrouding himself in his cloak, with that retiring modesty always attendant upon true genius and embarrassed affairs, he awaited the representation, anxiously scanning the general physiognomy of the jury upon whose verdict his fate was to depend.

The doors of boxes slammed, the buzz of human voices increased to a roar, and the orchestra commenced a needless piece of inaudible pleasantry, termed an overture. Its concluding chords alone reached Mr. Fogg's ear, and intense was the thrill they caused to pervade his bosom. Then came two minutes of intense expectancy, the scene not being ready, towards the end of which the people began to hiss, and terrible voices, apparently from the clouds, cried out, "Pull up!" with awe-inspiring energy, until the prompter's bell rang everybody into something like order, and the opening chorus of the performers struggled very energetically to rise above the opposition murmur of the audience, in which endeavour, after great exertion, it ultimately triumphed.

The drama proceeded with tolerable smoothness, although the majority of Mr. Fogg's pet jokes missed fire, in spite of the covert applause he endeavoured to establish after each one, with his heel against the panel of the box, — applause which died away, blushing and confused, as nobody took it up. But when Rose Cottage told the proud lord "that the heart of a virtuous English girl was a jewel far richer than the coronet of the haughty peeress," there was such a general burst of cheering, that it made amends for all the other omissions. And this enthusiasm was well sustained by the appearance of Tom Ratline, just as the father was being expelled from his cottage, who called the broker's men "land-sharks," and upbraided them "for scuttling a fine old hull amongst the breakers," recommending them also "to sheer off, if they did not wish their topsail figure-heads spliced to a marlinspike." All this being in support of a great right, viz. that "nature's aristocracy" have no right to pay any rent unless they like, met with very great applause. And here was Mr. Fogg's great dramatic tact clearly apparent, in writing for the minor theatres. For, however flat may have been the progress of a piece, the author has only to abuse the superior classes of society, and insinuate the "we've-as-much-a-right-as-they-have" theory of possession into the bosoms of the pit and gal-

leries, and his philanthropy will always meet with its due reward.

In spite of the fearful demons and ruffian pirates, with other desperate characters that Mr. Fogg delighted to create, his mind was naturally mild and gentle even to simplicity. Yet, notwithstanding his benevolent disposition, we almost doubt whether he did not wish, several times in the course of the performance, that the infant in arms, who cried unceasingly in the gallery, might fall over the front rail into the pit and break its neck, previously to being pulled up again to its solicitous parent by the united handkerchiefs and shawls of the company. But even here his better nature always prevailed in a short time; and when the act-drop came down, and one ancient woman exclaimed "Beautiful!" in the fulness of her admiration, as she applauded with a dislocated umbrella, unconscious of the author's presence, Mr. Fogg could have clasped her to his heart, albeit she was the queen of that anomalous tribe of elderly females, in wonderful bonnets and unestablished toilets, who come in with orders before seven, and people the upper boxes.

At length the curtain fell upon the last scene, and the suspense of our author was at an end. The drama was completely successful. And if nobody had been aware of the fact, the management took care to let everybody into the secret; for it was duly placarded as "the greatest hit ever made, *even* at that theatre," which, as every piece successively achieved the same progressive superiority, was in a fair way of arriving, at last, at some climax of prosperity beyond all human conception to form even a dim idea of. The weekly papers, too, gave it their full meed of praise, all agreeing, from the leading journal down to the Halfpenny Tomahawk, that it was full of sterling interest and exciting situations.

Mr. Fogg rushed round to the stage-door, and was behind the scenes almost before the stage was cleared, or the last applause had died away. Possibly this hurry was because he thought he might be called for. And indeed the prompter believed he heard cries of "Fogg! Fogg!"

amidst the cheering ; but they were not decided enough to bring the author before the curtain. But his gratitude was nevertheless unbounded. He thanked all the actors, collectively and individually, for their exertions ; he thanked the prompter for his attention ; he expressed his obligation to the carpenters, the " scene-shifters " of the common world, in a shape of three gallons of half-and-half, one to the traps, another to the stage, and the third to the flies,—a piece of remarkable liberality ; he told Scutt to go to the public house and order whatever he liked up to sixpence ; and finally he took Vincent's hand, and, shaking it with hysterical warmth, declared to him confidently that he could take a leap or a fall in every respect equal to Mr. Dilk. Having done all this, he quitted the theatre with his companion, leaving Mr. Groove, the prompter, to make such " cuts " as he thought advisable for its second representation. And Mr. Groove was unequalled in this task. If a question was asked at page five, and he found an answer at page nine that appeared applicable, he was accustomed to score out all the intermediate dialogue with his fatal pencil. This he called " bringing it up nearer together, and making it play close." Sometimes authors entertained a different opinion about the advantages of this abridgement ; but Mr. Groove always got the upper hand in the end.

" I hope you are satisfied with the success of your play," said Vincent to Mr. Fogg as they left the theatre.

" It is a great hit," replied his patron ; " although your situation is immensely dangerous."

" Oh ! that's nothing," said the other carelessly. " I have fallen twice the distance."

" I am speaking of it as connected with the feelings inspired by the plot," continued Mr. Fogg ; it is dramatically dangerous, not practically. But nothing venture, nothing have. I think I shall be able to show Mumford that others can write nautical dramas as well as himself—eh ?"

" Oh, certainly," answered Vincent ; not, however, having the least idea that Mumford was a rival author,

who wrote "The Nore Lights; or, the Wreck of the Goodwin Sands," which ran all the season.

"A month as a first piece I think I calculated on," soliloquized Mr. Fogg; "and two weeks at half-price, at half-a-guinea a night. Six times six is thirty-six — eighteen guineas: come, that will do."

"Then you said something about the country, I thought?" said Vincent.

"The country," rejoined Mr. Fogg, "is shy: the provincial drama is declining, and its halls are dark and lonely. The dress-circle becomes one large private box of four, and the policeman occupies the gallery. The days when we got half-a-crown an act are long since gone: they departed with those of gipsying."

It was Mr. Fogg's usual custom of an evening to be lost in reflection whenever he was going over Waterloo Bridge, — an abstraction arising from his unceasing endeavours to render the shot-tower available in a melodrama, which he thought some day of producing under the name of "The Mysteries of Lambeth." And on the present occasion he walked onward in silence, until he came against the wrong turnstile, which drew back his attention to passing events, and more particularly to a facetious gentleman, who was blocking up the toll, whilst he begged the keeper to oblige him with a sovereign's worth of halfpence, and not to mind the light ones; and also challenged him to toss up whether he would take a penny, or nothing; finally requesting to know, with great politeness, as a point of much interest, whether people who drowned themselves from the parapet paid as much for going over the bridge sideways as if they traversed it longitudinally. But, as turnpike-men are slow appreciators of jokes, and those on Waterloo Bridge especially so, the only answer returned was that he would "stow his gaff," — a *patois* expression, which sounded slightly nautical to Mr. Fogg's ears, although he knew no more of its practical meaning than if he had been told to reef his toplights, or put his compass hard-a-port.

"That voice!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg, as the facetious

gentleman again spoke. "Can it be possible? No, it isn't; yes, it is: those features! It is Mr. Jollit."

Mr. Joe Jollit, for it was that hilarious individual, having blocked up the toll long enough to collect a little crowd behind him, now went through, followed by Vincent and the author.

"Yes, you're right, Foggy," said Mr. Jollit. "I've been all the way over to applaud your piece. What do you think of that—eh?"

"My noble benefactor!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg as he seized his hand. "Permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. Scattergood, the gentleman who came down the rope; Mr. Jollit, Mr. Scattergood."

"Proud of the honour, sir," said Mr. Joe, touching the front of his hat with the top of his stick. "I'm an old friend of Mr. Fogg's, although I have not seen him for some time. But, you know, it isn't strange for Fogg to be *miss'd*. Come, I rather think that will do—eh?"

And then Mr. Jollit dug his stick into the author's ribs, previously to fencing at a lamp-post; and told Mr. Fogg not to put the witticism in his next play; which is a sort of conventional pleasantry applicable to all sorts of joking before authors: concluding this outburst of animal spirits by running after a hackney-coach that came through the gate, and riding behind it up to the corner of the Strand, where he waited for them.

"Still the same gay heart!" exclaimed Mr. Fogg to Vincent, in tones of admiration. "Three and twenty summers have passed lightly over his head, and yet in energy he is a giant. When I had a ticket-night last year he sold me six-and-thirty shillings' worth. The Bank of England nobly did its duty at that eventful crisis in my affairs."

The latter part of this speech was somewhat enigmatical to Vincent, who did not know Mr. Jollit's occupation; and any connexion between Mr. Fogg and the Bank of England was still more remarkable, as, indeed, was the mention of any bank; except the one upon which the wild thyme was reported to blow, and which he occasionally affirmed he knew.

"Well," said Mr. Joe, as they once more joined him, "I'm going to the Gooseberries to-night. We have not seen you there for ever-so-long. It was there, you know, I first met you. And pray, bring your friend."

"What are the Gooseberries?" inquired Vincent.

"A club of gents," replied Mr. Fogg, "principally literary and dramatic; who meet for harmony and social converse. You will be well received as my friend: and it may be of use to you to know them."

"It is not expensive, I hope?" said Vincent quietly, looking to the state of his own treasury.

"By no means," replied Mr. Fogg. "Besides, you must go this evening as my guest, and drink success to The Lee Shore."

CHAP. XIII.

A CLUB OF LITERARY AND DRAMATIC GENTS.

THE various members who collectively formed "The Gooseberries" were accustomed to meet once a-week at a house of public entertainment at the end of a court in the vicinity of the great theatres, where a room was specially kept for their accommodation.

The tavern was essentially a theatrical one. The landlord himself had been an actor; the greater portion of those who regularly frequented the house were performers; and the staple conversation of the company related to the drama and its accessories. The coffee-room in itself was a union of several little clubs; for every box had its peculiar set of occupiers, who met there night after night, to discuss the merits of the different pieces and managements; quietly submitting hints and rumours to their neighbours, in undertones, or giving out opinions in a loud and dictatorial manner to the whole room, the more energetic, as they appeared contrary to generally received notions, or those of

the majority of the audience. Besides the daily theatrical programmes, there were playbills of various kinds hung round the room, impaled upon the hat-pegs. Some were of country theatres, sent up by enterprising subordinates of the large houses, to show that they were playing Hamlet at Leamington or Wolverhampton, as the case might be. Others were benefit-announcements of names unknown to fame, which did not appear at the head of the placards of the day, so that the great world was in ignorance of the fact ; but whose owners distributed these, their private bills, amongst the shops and taverns they frequented, to be hung round the neck of the plaster brigand who guarded the dry cheroots in the window of the vendor of dusky, sun-bleached cigars ; or promoted to the dignity of being wafered on the looking-glass of the coffee-room, with an avant-guard of inverted ale-glasses and deal pipe-matches.

A perfect stranger might have been led to imagine that he was in the company of the principal stars in the theatrical hemisphere by the ponderous decision with which they delivered themselves of their opinions upon theatrical affairs. *They* were the men to pull up the drama, which is so fast settling into the low-water mud of unpopularity but the managers never gave them the chance ; *they* knew Shakspeare was stifled by the monopoly of false eminence, and only wanted their assistance to come round again to his former position ; *they* knew a man in the country to whom Kean was a supernumerary, whom conflicting interests, and wheels within wheels, kept from London ; and were well aware that it was in the provinces alone talent could be secured. But by those experienced in their usual style of conversation, a tolerably correct notion of their different physiologies was soon formed. The individual who hinted that the piece about to be produced was a very indifferent one, was certain to be cast for " Charles, his friend," instead of " Sir Harry Dashley, a young baronet ; " he was the heavy light-comedian, beyond all doubt. He who spoke perpetually of the great houses he used to bring as first tragedian in the country, was a provincial who had found his level on the metropolitan boards, exchanging

Hamlet for Osrick, and Glo'ster for Catesby. And he who saw nothing in the way in which any regular favourite played a character so as to attain unusual popularity, had tried the same part, and failed therein.

In the drama, as in literature, a person who stands in no one's way, unheeded by and unknown to the world, beyond bearing the repute of harmless mediocrity, will ever be warmly praised and complimented by his colleagues; but, let him attain the most infinitesimal share of popularity, and that success will be his damning crime. He will fall at once from the genius to the humbug. Whoever is acquainted with members of either of these two professions, and, possibly, with all the others, will know at once that the leading objects of their admiration are men, concerning whose abilities the great mass reckon in an inverse ratio; and that, on the other hand, the favourites of the million are, with them, mere impostors.

Mr. Fogg, accompanied by Vincent, and the ever-gay Jollit, entered the house, and proceeded up stairs to the private room belonging to the club. There were eight or ten members assembled, by whom Scattergood was courteously received upon his introduction; and they took their places at the table.

"What, ho! there!" cried Mr. Fogg, as the waiter was quitting the room.

"Marry, two goes of gin; and with what speed you may."

"I hope, Foggy, you mean to christen your play to-night," said Mr. Joe Jollit. And then, without waiting for an answer, he performed a solo upon an empty pipe, in the course of which he imitated various domestic animals by drawing atmospheric air through its perforation.

"You appear to be very intimate with your friend," said Vincent to the author.

Mr. Fogg drew his chair nearer the speaker, as if he was pulling it down to the front of the stage, and commenced: "Listen: 'tis now some five years since, one stormy winter's night——"

"I say, Fogg," interrupted a gentleman at the other

end, holding up a blue-covered pamphlet, "what will you give me for this?"

"I know not what it is," answered the person addressed.

"The first copy of the last farce at the *Variétés*, my boy," replied the speaker. "Look here — *L'Amour au deuxième Etage*."

"Has it been done yet?" eagerly inquired five dramatic authors at once.

"Rather," replied the other, whose name was Bodge. "I made two translations last night with different names. I shall call the one for the Olympic 'The Two Pair Back,' and the other for the Haymarket, 'Fanchette.' It's safe to go."

"That's a remarkable man," whispered Mr. Fogg to Vincent. "He has a regular situation of a guinea a-week at one of our leading houses, to translate every French play as it comes out; besides what he does on his own account."

"And has he much to do in that way?"

"A great deal," returned the author. "He was the first man who introduced five-shilling farces to the notice of managers; and they have patronised him ever since."

"But I should think that interfered with your interests," observed Vincent.

"By no means," answered his friend. "Mine, you see, is the true legitimate; nothing can shake it but a powerful rival. I began by writing five-act comedies, and other preparatory works, until I arrived at my present position. I pledge you."

And Mr. Fogg bowed into his glass of grog, and rose therefrom refreshed.

"Pray, silence, gentlemen," cried Mr. Joe Jollit, who appeared to be on the most intimate terms with everybody. "Order for a joke. Now, Mr. Silt, don't be nervous — try it again."

The gentleman addressed, who was an amateur actor, with light hair, and a blue stock, who shaved off his whiskers to look like a real one, and spoke learnedly of "floats," "borders," and "first entrances," blushed very deeply.

"I can assure you, gentlemen," continued Mr. Joe, "that Mr. Silt has brought us a joke, very ancient, and in the highest state of preservation."

"A case of burke," he whispered to Mr. Fogg, and then said, with an expression of great meaning, to the company, "I hope, gentlemen, you will not interrupt Mr. Silt."

"No; it was merely this," said Mr. Silt, causing his glass to revolve on its axis, and speaking with the air of a man trying to make the company believe he thought nothing of what he was about to say, whilst in reality he considered it a crack anecdote: "it was merely this. I was going one day from Greek Street to the Quadrant—"

"I beg your pardon," asked Mr. Jollit; "what o'clock was it?"

"I don't exactly recollect," replied Silt; "I should think, about one."

"Which one?" inquired another gentleman.

"Pray order!" said Mr. Jollit. "Now, Mr. Silt, you were going with a Greek to buy a quadrant,—go on."

"No, no; I am afraid you misunderstand me," continued the victim, Silt: "I was going to the Quadrant to buy some cigars."

"Ah! the Greek couldn't speak English, I suppose. I see," chimed in Mr. Bodge. "I knew a Greek once—"

"Really, gentlemen, you are interrupting Mr. Silt," said Mr. Joe, mildly deprecating the diversion.

"No, no," said Mr. Silt positively, and emphasizing every word, "I, came, from, Greek, Street, to, buy, some, cigars, in, the, Quadrant."

"Ha! ha! capital! very good!" laughed Jollit, rapping the table; "the best story you ever told!"

And the remainder of the company joined in applauding it

"I'm afraid we put you out," said Mr. Bodge, politely addressing Silt.

"You have not heard it all," answered the unsuspecting amateur, not yet put down. "The shop was kept by a Jew, where I always dealt—"

"What game did you play, then, always to deal?" inquired the chairman.

"Hush! order!" cried Mr. Jollit. "Mr. Silt was staying at Deal with a Jew. You're losing all the point of the story. And where was the Greek all this time?"

"It's no use; I can't go on," said Mr. Silt, stopping in great confusion, and turning it off by stirring his gin and water very frantically. Upon this the applause was renewed, and genius again gave way to relaxation; whilst the wag Jollit told Mr. Silt never to mind, as the joke would be sure to keep very well this cold weather, until next week, and perhaps its flavour would be improved.

"I hope, Crowle, you will give me a few lines in the paper on Sunday," observed Mr. Fogg, confidentially, to a gentleman near him.

"Did the piece go?" asked Mr. Crowle, who had interest with the press.

"Enormously, and the leap told tremendously. By the way, allow me; Mr. Scattergood, Mr. Crowle.—Mr. Crowle, Mr. Scattergood," continued Mr. Fogg, introducing his friend in the double fashion common to the profession. "An influential journalist," he whispered to Vincent, as he acknowledged the other's bow.

"I need not go all the way to see it, I suppose" observed Mr. Crowle.

"Oh no!" said the author; here is the play-bill. That," he went on, marking part of the programme with a peculiarly stumpy pencil, "that was the great effect; and you can say that the different people played with their usual ability."

"All right," replied the other, folding up the bill.

"Much obliged," returned Mr. Fogg; "and if you could put a spoke in the wheel of the other house whilst you are about it, it will do no harm."

The conversation now became general; not, however, until Mr. Silt had attempted another slow story without effect. And at last Mr. Fogg and Vincent took their departure, accompanied by Mr. Jollit, in getting quit of whom they found some difficulty. For Mr. Fogg, delicate

in mind, with a fine sense of proper pride, did not wish Joe to know the humble tenement he occupied. And he was equally sensitive on this point with respect to everybody else; so that it was the custom whenever he left the club to twit him with living in various marvellous localities, some of his friends assigning to him the dark arch in the Adelphi, and others the night-reversion of a gigantic advertising cart, on consideration of his writing poetry for the establishment.

Fortunately, a street row attracted Mr. Jollit's attention. He directly plunged into the centre of the group of disputants "to see all fair, and that the police did not exceed their duty;" and Mr. Fogg and Vincent, taking advantage of this diversion, went straight home.

As Mr. Fogg opened the door, he found that a letter, addressed to him, had been slipped underneath in his absence. After the usual speculation as to the writer, and vainly endeavouring to decypher the post-mark, he proceeded to the best means of solving the mystery.

"An engagement!" he exclaimed, as he read it. "An engagement for six months as the house-author, in one of our first provincial theatres. I must away at dawn. The spell is broken—we must part. The steam-packet is cheap: once more to the dark and howling waters of the wild unbounded sea!"

And at the conclusion of this energetic speech he imitated a prompter's whistle, as if the front pair of "flats" were to close in upon him; and then retired pensively to bed. And so did Vincent; but in a state of mind far less self-satisfactory, from the vague prospect which again opened before him.

CHAP. XIV.

THE CLOISTERS; THE MONITORS, AND THEIR VICTIMS.

FREDDY remained for an hour unnoticed by any one, whilst the usual morning business of the school proceeded.

But there was plenty to attract his attention. The boys above him on the form, which had three ascending seats, amused themselves by jerking hot wax from the candles upon his hair and clothes ; and such a perpetual exhibition of corporal punishment went on throughout all the classes, that at last the constant strokes of the canes, which echoed in the vast room, sharp and distinct as the crack of a rifle, resembled the irregular firing of a body of soldiers. The younger boys writhed and cried out in agony under the infliction ; then they were beaten again. But the elder ones made it a point of emulation to stand the torture unflinchingly. And when the thick cane descended savagely upon their cold hand and fingers, and left a purple and burning mark behind, they pinched it between their other arm and side, to numb the hurt ; and bit their lip in defiance, until the pain was lessened, and the next stroke came, and others after that, until their hands became as callous as their minds.

At nine o'clock the simple word " Go !" from one of the masters, dissolved the school for breakfast, and there was a simultaneous rush to the cloisters. Frederick took his cap, which he had kept in his lap all the time, and followed the rest, or was rather jostled and carried down stairs by the others. The general attack was then made upon a species of watchbox under the staircase, in which an old woman was dispensing small cups of coffee at a penny, and buttered rolls at three-half-pence each. Freddy had been told something about getting his breakfast ; but he was not hungry. He was far too miserable to think of eating.

But those whose spirits allowed them to feed—which in all truth they did, and with wondrous appetites — enjoyed their breakfast in proportion to the great difficulty of obtaining it, which was an undertaking of great exertion, and fraught with much danger to the comestibles ; for there was such a driving, and elbowing, and shoving, and scrambling over one another's backs and shoulders, to get at the pigeon-hole entrance, and reach over its outwork, formed by the shutter, which let down with two

chains, that very few cups of coffee came safe out of the *mélée*; and some were even seen dancing high in the air, shooting up like rockets from the centre of the throng, and discharging their contents upon the heads of those below. Those who were lucky enough to secure the roll retired immediately into dark corners to eat it, amongst a set of little boys, who always shrunk into the obscure parts of the cloisters from sheer timidity.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Gogsley, coming suddenly upon Frederick, and dragging him out of his ambush. "We're looking for you. Now, you fellows, here's the new boy."

There was a general cheer, and a rush towards Frederick, and in an instant he was caught up by a dozen different hands, and his limbs pulled violently into as many directions, as his captors carried him in triumph to the end of the cloisters, and proceeded to the ceremony of installation by "bumping," turning him into a human battering-ram against one of the massive stone pillars that supported the school-room.

At last they left their unresisting victim, bruised, sprained, and crying, at the end of the cloisters. He went and sat down upon the door-sill of one of the master's robing-rooms*, and wept bitterly. But he did not remain long undisturbed. A boy came running along the pavement with a tea-kettle, and, catching sight of Freddy, poured a little boiling water over his shoes by way of introduction, and then added,

"I say, weren't you on the first form this morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied Frederick meekly, through his tears.

"My eye! won't you catch it then, that's all. You ought to be fagging in the school-room. I'd advise you to come up."

Unconscious what new style of persecution awaited him, Freddy followed the other boy up stairs, and entered the school-room, where the monitors were at breakfast before the fire, upon an *extempore* table formed by forms and the

* It is perhaps needless to tell the old Merchant Tailors that this site is now occupied by the writing-school.

masters' foot-stools. Some of the boys were cleaning knives, others were washing tea-things, and the rest engaged in similar menial operations, calculated to have an equally beneficial effect upon young minds.

"Oh! you are the skulker, are you?" asked one of the monitors, a sullen-looking young man in a white cravat. "Hold up your face."

"Please, sir," exclaimed Frederick, "I did not know—"

"Hold up your face, sir!" exclaimed the other sharply. The terrified little boy obeyed as a trained animal would have done, and the monitor dealt him two terrific boxes on the ear. "Now, then, make the toast," he added sharply, as Freddy pressed his hands to his cheeks, almost blistered by the assault.

It appeared far easier to give this order than to carry it into effect; for the fire-place was surrounded by a large fender, or guard, of thick iron wire, four or five feet high, and bars of the same material across the top. Frederick looked at this despairingly for a minute or two, and then ventured to ask one of the other fags, who was wiping a slop-basin, what he should do.

"You must climb up, and get inside," said the boy. "You'll find it out soon enough."

It was a large blazing fire, sufficiently fierce to have roasted a sheep at. But Frederick was compelled to take his toasting-fork, and crept inside, where he remained, scorched and smarting, until his task was accomplished. He felt completely crushed; and when he thought of home again, how differently he would be treated, and how Clara would have got him a screen, if he only hinted at the warmth, his misery redoubled. Fright, however, made him pay great attention to his task, and he succeeded in pleasing his tormentors, for which the only return he got was a command always to make the toast in future.

The monitors finished breakfast, and what they left became the perquisites of the fags; in the same fashion as the scraps of a feast would be given to so many animals. Before the school was called again, the boy who had taken Freddy's name down at the door, when he returned with Gogsley's imposition, came into the room.

"How many were late, Palmer?" asked the monitor.

"Only one—a new boy," replied the other, handing him a small slip of paper. "Scattergood."

"That's your name—isn't it?" inquired the monitor, addressing Frederick.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. When the master comes in, you will go up to him and be lick'd. That's all; you may go."

Frederick turned away trembling, and took his seat upon the first form, where he had been placed in the morning.

"If this goes on," he thought, "I know what I shall do. They will be very angry if I went home without leave. I shall run away."

CHAP. XV.

MR. FOGG LEAVES LONDON, AND VINCENT MEETS WITH MR. BOLT
UPON TOWER HILL.

It did not take long for Mr. Fogg to arrange affairs for his departure. The care of looking after the products of his various plays in his absence was left in the hands of the Dramatic Authors' Society, which is a pleasant institution for enjoying the luxuries of law at a small expense, subscribing to defray the costs of litigious members, and hunting country managers into corners, from which they are unable either to come out or come down,—a chase as exciting in its progress, and generally as profitable in its result, as that of a red herring.

On the afternoon following the receipt of his letter, Mr. Fogg prepared to leave the metropolis. His wardrobe was packed up in a curiously ancient black portmanteau, similar to the one which comic travellers bring on the stage with great toil, and then sit down upon, in romantic melodramas. But, as his toilet was not very extensive, the spare room was filled up with prompters' copies of unpublished plays; two or three damned farces,

to be brought out under new names in the country, or, if that failed, to be turned into dialogue stories for the magazines; and a collection of minor-theatre play-bills, with full programmes of the scenery and incidents, for the provincial typographers to copy from. The furniture and "properties" of his chamber were left in the care of the landlady of the house, who resided in the back kitchen, to which Mr. Fogg usually descended as if he bore a torch to soft music. And then, about six in the evening, accompanied by Vincent, (who did not perform that night, in consequence of a benefit, with a change of pieces,) he gave up the key, and left his abode; begging his hostess to bear in mind "that an interval of six months might be supposed to elapse between the departure and the return."

It was dark when they got to London Bridge, where the steamboat, in whose fore-cabin Mr. Fogg was to voyage to Yarmouth, was lying. But there was a great deal of bustle; for a large foreign boat had just arrived, and was discharging her load upon the lighters; and heavy porters came pressing forward, with "By your leave," which they took without waiting for an answer; and foreign gentlemen, in remarkable caps, clinging to leather hat-boxes, as though all that was dear to them in existence was inclosed therein, vandyked with indecision about the quay, as they tried to recollect the name of the hotel in the "Place de Lester-square," to which they had been recommended, and to see if it was the same as the various touters on the wharfs assured them it was.

Vincent went on board with Mr. Fogg, to stay with him until the bell rang to go on shore; and the author forthwith took possession of his berth; all of which resting-places together had somewhat the appearance of a double row of continuous Punch's shows, both as regarded size and drapery, which was of that popular blue check familiar to the public. And, indeed, after Mr. Fogg had been inducted to his roosting-place by the steward's assistant, whom he called "box-keeper," he found that the attitude he was compelled to assume therein resembled that of the facetious puppet, when thrown into convulsions

by the appearance of the ghost, previously to informing his usual medical attendant that he was very bad to-morrow.

"You will write to me, I hope," said Mr. Fogg. "I shall be anxious to hear how you get on, and what you are doing. I will send you up the play-bills, and then you will know where I am located."

"I should be very glad to come to you," returned Vincent; "for I do not see what I shall do in London, especially when you are gone. I appear to be as badly off as the night I first came up to town."

"Take comfort, sir, and hope a better day," continued the author. "You are entitled to my lodgings until Wednesday; for I have paid up until then. And, after that, never douse your toplights, but brace up your foresail-halyards against the breakers of misfortune, and drop hope's anchor in the haven of happiness, which ever assists the bold mariner, who never says die. Ah!" resumed Mr. Fogg, reverting from the present to the retrospective, "I remember when that speech used to get three rounds. Those were the palmy days for the Shaksperian nautical drama!"

At length the voice of one of the crew shouted down stairs, "Now, who's for shore?" in a manner that shewed the question was not to be trifled with, unless people wished to be carried off against their intentions. Vincent shook Fogg warmly by the hand, and the author was no less hearty in his farewell; for he had the heart of an infant, despite his love of the terrible. And he even made a slight allusion to the state of his lee-scutters, for so he called his eyes, as he parted from his friend; whilst the other left the steamer, and remained upon the wharf until it had cast loose its moorings, or whatever they were, and moved away down the river.

It was soon out of sight in the dark evening, and then Vincent, when he could watch it no more, turned away. Nor did he find until this moment that even the simple-hearted dramatist, who painted life without knowing it, and abounded in the milk of human kindness, whilst he

revelled in the blood of unnatural ferocity,—that this unit in the last census, by his departure, had left a void too large for the remaining millions to fill up, who were bustling about, and crossing each other's path, like so many ants, around him.

There is no solitude so terrible and dreary as that felt in the very heart of a vast, unsympathizing city,—nothing that gives an idea of utter and chilling loneliness so forcibly as being surrounded by crowds who know you not, nor have one feeling or one interest in common with your own. In the wilderness of nature, the solitary island, the deep tranquil forest, or even the dismal and trackless desert, where but a few harsh and arid plants alone thrust their thirsty heads above the sand to drink the night-dews, there is still companionship. Every product of the earth, every minute living thing that creeps upon it, or murmurs on its course through the air, holds converse with our mind, and in some measure becomes a part and parcel of our being. But in the peopled city, all around us bears an alien aspect; we dare not therein look for company. There is no more fellowship in the hearts of those we meet than in the flinty pavement they traverse. Their very presence estranges those things from us in which — alone — we might perhaps find a mute sympathy, and teaches us they exist not for ourselves, but for others.

Bitterly feeling these hard truths, Vincent turned away from the wharf, and, perfectly heedless of going in any particular direction, wandered along Thames Street, until he came to Tower Hill; and, as he strolled over its open space, lost himself in a tangled labyrinth of plans and speculations, each one to be put aside by that which followed it, until his ideas got into such an inextricable mass of confusion, that with an effort he dismissed the elaboration of the subject altogether; and, lighting his pipe—his usual resource when perplexed or irritated—he walked rapidly backwards and forwards along the edge of the moat, endeavouring to wear away his mental anxiety by bodily energy, to tranquillize himself, if not by philosophy and self-reasoning, at least by exhaustion.

There are few places in England which preserve so perfectly the aspect of an old continental town as Tower Hill and its surrounding buildings, when viewed through the medium of moonlight, sufficiently tempered to wrap its more prominent objects in semi-obscurity, whilst at the same time it permits the general outline of the fortifications to be visible. The irregular buildings of the fortress itself, with lights gleaming from small windows high in air, and dim oil lamps flickering at wide intervals on different portions of the outworks,—the open expanse of the hill, with its borders of trees before the houses, forming a rude species of boulevard, assist in completing the picture ; and so Vincent thought, as he gazed listlessly around him. Every now and then the roll of a drum from the interior echoed along the ramparts, followed by the challenge of a sentinel ; and occasionally indistinct sounds of music and revelry broke from some of the taverns, where a few mariners had assembled from their vessels in the pool, to make merry, and get rid of their hardly-earned payments as speedily as might be. But beyond this there was little noise ; for Tower Hill is not a great thoroughfare, and towards evening is comparatively deserted, except by those whose interests lie within its precincts.

As Vincent Scattergood leant against the rails, and ruminated as he smoked, his eye fell upon a little knot of people who had collected against the railings of Trinity Square, and from whom bursts of laughter occasionally broke upon the general stillness, as they apparently listened to the harangue of a man, before whom a red glaring light was burning, which threw its shadows, not altogether unpicturesquely, upon the assembled throng. As he was in the humour to seize upon any incident, however trifling, that might divert his feelings, he drew towards the assembled loiterers, and was soon astonished at discovering that an old acquaintance of his own was the object of attraction.

For there, in front of a small covered vehicle, something resembling those driven by the Holloway and Dulwich carriers, elevated upon a platform laid across the shafts,

which were raised to a level by a rough trestle of rustic workmanship, stood Mr. Cricket, otherwise, and in worldly intercourse, Bolt. He was haranguing the assembled crowd in praise of the wares which stocked the interior of his small vehicle, and this was a sort of bazaar upon wheels, so numerous were its articles for sale. Indeed, by looking at them, it would have been a point of great difficulty to have told precisely to what species of British manufacture Mr. Bolt especially confined his mercantile exertions; for there were waistcoats and memorandum-books, guns, handkerchiefs, and two-foot rules; tea-trays, saws, and writing-paper; pewter spoons, shaving-boxes, and pocket tool-chests in such profusion, that the cart, which was called the "Noah's Ark," really carried out its name, as being especially constructed to hand specimens of everything down to posterity. He was speaking as Vincent approached his rostrum; and, not caring to interrupt him before his listeners, our hero joined the group, and paid attention, along with the rest, to his harangue.

"Now, come nearer," said Mr. Bolt, "and then you won't be quite so far off: there's good people. You buy as slowly as lawyers go to heaven, and that takes a long time for 'em to do. My father was a lawyer, and went aloft in a hackney coach. He's been on the road six months, and hasn't got half way there yet. Now, why don't you buy this teapot?"

"Because we haven't got the money," replied a rash spectator, who directly afterwards was very sorry he had spoken.

"I should say so," observed Mr. Bolt. "You look as if you couldn't lay out a shilling without giving your pocket a fortnight's notice of it. I could get rid of my cargo twice as quick in Sheffield, where they come from; for, if they haven't got the money to buy there, they've got the pluck to steal, and you've got neither. Well—you're partikler. I'll knock you down with the butt-end of my nonsense now, though, before I've done with you."

And Mr. Bolt, retiring to the mysterious depths of his

caravan, came forward armed with half-a-dozen dinner-knives and forks of the best cast-iron.

"Here's a bargain for ten pounds," he cried. "They're cheaper than mackarel at a penny a dozen, and won't get bad if they're kept, which the mackarel will. I sold some like them to a great nobleman, named George, who lives across the river. He's got a farm, and keeps three tom-cats, a billy-goat, and a butterfly, to do his work. He gives my brother three guineas a-week to ride a black beetle amongst the cabbages, and hunt the slugs. If ten pounds is above your figure, take ten shillings: if this won't do, take five—four—three—two—one. Who's for 'em at one? I can sell 'em for what I like, and be a gainer, because they don't cost me anything at first."

The knives and forks were rapidly purchased, and Mr. Bolt, seeing that they stood well in the market, took out six more.

"They were good ones I just sold," he said; "but these are better. Don't you know why? Because I have got them to sell. Buying knives is like marrying women: you ought first to try their temper. These are very good-tempered, and wouldn't cut anything so as to hurt it for the world. Perhaps you don't believe that's a lie, but it is."

In this strain did Mr. Bolt continue for some time to the great edification and delight of his listeners, who might well have conceived from his unceasing eloquence, that, coming from the manufacturing districts, he had provided himself with a pair of the best cast-iron lungs, upon very moderate terms. But at length the auction began to hang very heavily on hand, in spite of all the seller's efforts to continue it with proper spirit. He appealed to their liberality, and insulted their poverty, but alike in vain, until his stock of patter being exhausted, even to repetition two or three times over, as well as the pockets of the bystanders, he recommended them, if they were dissatisfied with any of their bargains, not to come and make any complaints before that time to-morrow, when they would be certain not to find him; and then proclaimed the sale closed for the evening.

The people soon dispersed, and then Vincent went up and addressed the auctioneer. He was apparently in the habit of seeing so many different people, under so many various phases, that he did not at first recollect the person who addressed him, until Vincent produced the dirty public-house card which the other had given him on the night they arrived together in London.

"Why, to be sure—so it is, Mr. Vinson," exclaimed the free-trader. "I've been looking forrards to hear of you this ever so long. And what's been up since we parted co, as the saying is?"

Vincent briefly related the upshot of his accidental meeting with Mr. Fogg, and then went on to intimate to Bolt the various indefinite notions he entertained as to what he should do next.

"I told you once," replied the trader, "there was a living to be got in London by everybody, if they wasn't over-particular, and know'd how to set about it."

"You appear to have found out the way."

"Well, I believe I have. This is about the best line of all, though." And he continued, whilst he patted the shafts of his cart in the same manner as he would have done a favourite animal;—"Of your honest dodges this is the one; when you comes to the others, they're promiscus. It's through this you've heard so much of me in the Times; not by my paid advertisements, but by their own private remarks of the gentleman as writes the whole of that wonderful paper every day, in the leading-article. I've often thought how uncommon 'cute with his pen that codger must be. Halloo, Sam!"

This last remark was addressed to a human being, from whose appearance it would have been difficult to tell whether he was a convict or a charity-boy, and whom Vincent had hitherto looked upon as a sack, as he lay coiled up asleep in the back of the waggon. He started from his sleep as he was called, and rubbing his large, dull eyes, awaited Mr. Bolt's orders.

"Now, look sharp, old Ten-stone-and-a-half," said the master. "Shut up the shop; and let me find it off the

Commercial Road to-morrow. — What do you mean to do with yourself to-night ? ” he added, turning to Vincent.

“ Nothing : I am ready and willing to do anything.”

“ Then come with me,” answered the other ; and if we do not find anything for you at once, I’ll show you where you may at another time.”

So speaking Mr. Bolt confided the Noah’s Ark to the care of the assistant, and accompanied by Vincent, proceeded across Little Tower Hill.

CHAP. XVI.

FREDERICK SCATTERGOOD RUNS AWAY FROM MERCHANT TAILORS’.

THE first fortnight passed away without any diminution of the persecuting tyranny to which the little boy was subjected at the public school. Every morning brought with it the unrelenting cruelty of the monitors ; every day the indiscriminating chastisement to which he was subject. He was fagged in the school-room during the hours that he was at the mercy of his superior fellows ; he was bullied in the cloisters by the other boys — even by those younger than himself, who seeing his quiet and inoffensive disposition, played off any cruelties upon him that their evil spirits suggested ; and at home, or rather at Mr. Snap’s, he was driven about by Gogsley upon the most menial errands.

He wrote home, but it was generally upon the sly, creeping down in the dreary gloom of early morning, before the others had risen, or sitting upon the steps of warehouses as he went to school, that he might not be seen. For the others read his letters, and made merry with the contents, adding, occasionally, postscripts of their own, or taunting him afterwards with the homely expressions of feeling and affection which he gave utterance to therein. But, lacking power to paint the troubles he underwent in their true

light, his epistles were received by his family as the natural products of a boy's discomfort at going to school for the first time ; and, regarded merely in the abstract, produced only replies meant, in all love, to be consolatory, that Easter would soon arrive, and that every day he would be happier. And when he hinted at wishing to come home — if for ever so short a time, a Sunday afternoon, or an hour or two on the usual half-holidays allowed by the school,—the fear of his mother that such a visit would but unsettle him the more upon his return (in which opinion Mr. Scattergood always warmly coincided, to save being asked for his own), made him the more wretched, as it took away the brightest hope he cherished.

It was a custom with several of the boys who left the afternoon-school earlier than the others, according to the order in which they were called up to be heard, to go and play upon the wharfs in the neighbourhood of Suffolk Lane, joining in hide-and-seek amongst the casks, making up-and-downs with the timber, or assisting the men to unload such things as they could carry from the barges ; and sometimes they joined in the more dangerous pastime, when the lighters were empty, of chasing their fellows from one to the other, running along the gunwales, and leaping over the intervening spaces. A party of boys from one of the neighbouring free-schools were in the habit, also, of assembling at the same place, and this led to frequent collisions between the two parties, with all the acerbity of the “gown and town” rows pertaining to a more advanced academical career, until open war was proclaimed between the public-school-boys and the “blackguards,” as the others were termed by the pupils of Merchant Tailors’. And at last *mêlées* and single combats daily took place in all the courts and lanes surrounding the school ; and the single partizan of either clan, caught by himself, had a sorry reception.

There is a peculiar festival held at Merchant Tailors’ School, termed “Probation Day.” It is chiefly dedicated to breaking the windows of the school-room, cutting the

book-straps of the little boys, pouring ink over their heads, or spluttering it upon their lay-down collars, and devouring a particular sort of sausage-roll, manufactured expressly for the occasion. It is also a day of commercial speculation, coupled with the comfortable prospect of certain profits to the heads of the academy, who become, for the time being, retail stationers, and sell copybooks of humble value to their pupils for a shilling a-piece. In these are written Latin and Greek exercises, which become the sole property of oblivion, wherein also the copyright is vested. And on those especial days, less faith than usual appears to be placed in the school clock, which keeps time below the imposing arms, with their rampant dromedaries, at the end of the room, and their very appropriate motto, "*Parvæ res concordîâ crescunt*," or, in proper vernacular, "Nine tailors make a man;" for the clock is then completely out of favour, and a silver hour-glass is introduced, which performs gymnastic feats upon the head-master's desk, tumbling head over heels at stated intervals, (announced by the rap of a hammer, similiar to those used by chairmen of convivial taverns, and auctioneers in the Poultry,) before the time of day is given out in wonderfully elaborate mouthfuls of words, which complicate the simple period "three o'clock" into "*horâ tertiâ et ultimâ pomeridianâ*." Legends, impressed upon the juvenile pupils with due gravity, go to prove that this hour-glass is in the yearly habit of laying a number of egg boilers, which are disposed of through the medium of the wheels of Fortune at the lounges of Lowther and Tulley; and the gigantic ancestor of the whole race is shown to awestruck freshmen, sculptured in stone on an immense scale, and elevated in front of a public-house for the sale of Calvert's Entire, which, situated on the southern side of Upper Thames Street, appears in solitary majesty to watch over the time misspent in the opposite Suffolk Lane.

The real importance of this day is not known: when it is over, the books are collected, and are apparently seen no more. But the scholars evidently think it one of great toil and unpleasantry; for no sooner has the last orison of

the evening prayers fallen from the lips of the boy whose duty it is to repeat them for the day, than its echoes are crushed by a loud and long huzza, in lieu of response, which resounds for some minutes through the courts and startled warehouses of the vicinity, arresting the passengers, who look up towards the school-room windows for a solution of the mystic noise, and are greeted in return by showers of broken glass from the book-assailed casements, and in another moment by the outburst of whooping, turbulent youths from the interior.

Probation Day was over, and Frederick Scattergood went down to the wharfs to play with some of his fellows in the interval between the close of the school and tea-time at the Rev. Mr. Snap's. The boys, who had broken forth like so many caged animals, were elate with the conclusion of their labours; and, upon arriving at the water-side, finding that some of the free-school lads had taken possession of the tubs and bales amongst which they usually played, prepared to eject them. The others, entertaining different ideas upon the subject, resisted the attack, and in two minutes both parties were engaged in a regular contest.

Some of the younger and more timid boys took to flight at the commencement of the hostilities, and amongst them was Frederick; but, just as he was running out of the gateway leading from the wharf, he was met by a party of the antagonists; and driving him into a corner, they immediately set upon him in a very savage and cowardly manner, striking him about the head and face, until his upper lip and ears were covered with blood. It was perfectly useless attempting to resist them. He shielded himself from their attacks as long as he was able, and at last, seizing upon an opportunity, darted off towards the river, with the whole pack huzzaing and shouting at his heels. Scared almost out of his senses, he ran down a plank used by the men who were unlading, on to one of the barges. The free-school boys followed him, now more delighted at the extreme terror of their victim, than anxious to beat him. The poor little fellow scrambled from one barge to the

other, until he came to the last of those which lay together, when, running along the edge of it to reach a spot where some of the Merchant Tailors had collected in triumph, having beaten off their adversaries, his foot slipped, and he tumbled over head and ears into the water.

In an instant, the alarm was given, and the boys, ceasing their hostilities, crowded to the edge of the river, calling loudly for help ; for the tide was running down very fast, and Frederick was being already carried into the current, now struggling, and throwing his arms out for assistance, and the next moment sinking beneath the surface. Fortunately, there was a man at work in a boat by the side of one of the lighters, and he directly put off after him, and succeeded before another minute had elapsed in saving him, returning to the wharf amidst the cheers of the boys, who had forgotten all their quarrels in the excitement of the accident.

But the mirth was of very short duration. One of the masters, who had received intelligence of the uproar on the wharf when it first began, had hastened there to the water-side, determined to stop it. He arrived there just as poor Freddy was taken from the boat, dripping wet, and still bleeding ; for the bath had been insufficient to wash away the results of the chastisement he had received. Ascertaining that the accident had been the result of a conflict with the lads of the free-school, and no doubt looking upon little Scattergood as the ringleader, he took down his name, and, ordering the rest of the boys to disperse, told Frederick to go home and seek fresh clothing directly, and bear in mind that he should expect to see him at school on the next morning that it opened.

"Well," said Gogsley to him that evening, as the boarders were once more assembled round Mr. Snap's hearth, "I would not change places with you for a week's holiday. You won't have an inch of skin left on your back. Don't he cut deep when he has a mind ?—that's all."

"I was not fighting at all," replied Frederick. "It was in trying to get away that it happened."

"Oh, yes, of course: you are always innocent; I should think so," said Gogsley. "Hold out your hand for telling crams."

"No, I won't," answered Frederick, for once revolting against such continued bullying, and putting both his hands in his pockets.

"You won't!" observed Gogsley; "very well." And gravely taking his handkerchief from his pocket, he twisted it into a thong, and tied it in the middle in a double knot.

"Now, come here," he continued, when these preparations for torture were completed. "Cashbox, hold down his head."

This order was given to young Jollit, who was too much in dread of Gogsley, not to obey him immediately.

"Hold it down lower," cried the tyrant, "and make his clothes tight. Now, then—one, two, three—fire!"

At the last word he struck Freddy so violently with the knot, that a scream of pain broke from the victim, so loud, as to make his persecutor desist, for fear of alarming Mr. Snap.

"That will make you speak the truth," said Gogsley.

Now, leave off blubbering, or else I shall lick you again. Do you hear me?—leave off, I say."

"I'd recommend you to put a copy-book up your back," said Plunkett, "if you can't stand fire better than that; for you will be sure to catch it pretty tidily at the school. Rasper bought such a bundle of thick canes yesterday!"

"Canes!" said Gogsley; "he won't get off so easily. You'll be birched; I suppose you know that; and have bits cut right out of you."

The arrival of bed-time put a stop to this ingenious course of torture. But Frederick did not go to sleep. In an agony of pain, excitement, and terrible anticipations, until he lay fevered and quivering in the bed, provoking endless remonstrances and cuffs from Plunkett for his restlessness, he heard every quarter from the gloomy chimes of St. Paul's for the greater part of the night. He knew what a severe punishment awaited him if he re-

mained ; and yet he did not dare to go home, because he was certain that his father would send him back again directly. At last he determined to run away, — he scarcely could tell whither, but stay at the school any longer he would not.

The next day was a holiday, but the pupils were allowed by Mr. Snap to go out in the afternoon. There was a mountebank exhibiting in one of the small thoroughfares near the house, and the boys stopped to look at him. This attracted their attention, and Frederick, taking advantage of it crept through the crowd, slipped up an adjoining court, and was soon out of their sight.

He ran quickly along two or three lanes, until he found himself at the Mansion House. And now which way was he to go ? He had only threepence in his pocket, his weekly allowance, which had just been given to him, and this would not help him much upon any road. Whichever way he journeyed must be on foot. At last he recollected when his family lived in Essex, that he used to come to town along Whitechapel whenever they visited London ; and this decided him upon going in that direction. Vague enough, to be sure, were his ideas of the country beyond that thoroughfare ; but, next to Boulogne, there was no other direction in which he knew a soul. Indeed, with him these two localities were the world.

The clock struck three as he started off along Cornhill. It was a fine bright afternoon : warm, too, for the time of year. People had left their great-coats at home for the first time, and walked about with cheerful faces. Gay ribbons and light fabrics in the windows of the drapers peeped out from amongst the more sober articles, like snowdrops from the dull, wintry ground. Weathercocks gleamed in the sunlight against the blue sky ; long trucks of crisp fragrant heath and tinted daisies, redolent of country odours, appeared to supplant the sickly hyacinths on the window-sills. Travellers forsook the interiors of omnibuses, and climbed the roof, to the great joy of the drivers, legended to pocket all fees therefrom derived. Frugal housekeepers began to think of letting their fires

out in the middle of the day, and dreamt of coloured willow shavings and elaborate dissections of many-nicked silver paper, to the great detriment of that trade which Mr. Chicksand affected to be a wholesale speculator in. Everything appeared looking forward to the spring; and perhaps everything turned out very delusive, even the next morning, as pleasant anticipations usually do.

Freddy felt at liberty, but at the same time terrified at his freedom; he was as embarrassed as a loose canary; and when he collected sufficient courage to ask a waterman at a cab-stand the way to Whitechapel, and the waterman looked at him with a glance which none but ogres in story-book woodcuts ever have been known to assume, with the exception of the terrible Turks who roll their eyes in moveable magic-lantern slides, and said, "he hoped as he wasn't the little boy that all the newspapers said had run away from school," he was so frightened, that he determined at all risks to pursue his indefinite journey as well as he could by guessing, rather than again submit to such a thrilling intimation.

He remembered the butchers, sheds in the High Street; because, when a very little boy, he used to gaze at them from the coach-windows as he came into London, and wondered whether there were enough people in the world to eat all the legs of mutton that hung in endless rows from their penthouses. So this assured him that he was going in the right direction! and he walked on and on, until the road widened, and the footpath became broad and unpaved, towards which houses pushed out shops from their ground-floors; and here and there little bits of dirty turf, which had been apparently planted with birchbrooms pulled to pieces, tried to look like gardens. Then came a tract of country covered with nothing else but almshouses and hospitals, sometimes broken by a dingy enclosure of mouldy grass, "to let on a building lease," in the centre of which a dismal cow was gradually starving; next, more rows of dwellings, with a public-house at each extremity; and then again fields, larger and broader, with attempts at trees and hedges, but still encompassed by formal rows of

buildings, warehouses with open walls, letting in the air upon unknown productions, and chimneys from which black smoke was vomited continually. Sundays, weekdays, or holidays—morning, noon, and night, it came forth just the same.

The afternoon was declining as he reached Bow, and the sun was throwing its latest beams upon the tower of the old church, before it retired for the night beneath the orange-coloured vapour that hung over London. And now, for the first time, Frederick began to consider what he was to do when night came. He was already rather tired; not so much so but he could have walked some miles further, if needed; still he knew that he must ultimately knock up, and then where was he to look for shelter? He had not money enough to procure a bed. Indeed, if he had possessed sufficient, he would have been afraid of applying for one.

He was getting hungry, too. His persecutions and misery had taken away his appetite at dinner, but the walk had restored it with double sharpness; so, after dusting his shoes, that attention might not be called to them, he ventured into a chandler's shop, and purchased a small piece of cheese. He thought the woman who served him looked suspiciously at him, as if, in fact, she was perfectly aware that he had come that afternoon from school, and was going on with very undefined notions of his journey. He next bought a roll at an adjoining baker's, and, keeping both these things in his pocket, he picked pieces off and ate them as he went along, which diverted him until he reached Stratford, where the road divided.

It was now nearly dusk, and he was perfectly undecided which thoroughfare to follow. There were direction-posts to each; but it was too dark to see them, and he was afraid to ask anybody where either of them led to; so that, in great trouble, he sat down upon the churchyard rails, and almost cried for very perplexity.

He began to think that he had done very wrong in leaving the school, and wondered what they were doing at that moment at Mr. Snap's, and how the discovery of his

flight had affected the establishment. Then he supposed they would send home to see if he was there,—perhaps they had done so already. And what trouble that would put them in, not knowing where he was! Poor Clara, who was always so kind to him, and his mother. Oh! it was very terrible!

He would have gone back; but the dread of being taken again to the quarters he had just quitted drove the idea from his mind. He must go on, but whither? How comfortable he thought, everybody around him appeared; for they all knew where they were going to sleep. Even the old woman at the fruit-stall close to the inn must have somewhere, however humble the lodging was, to go to; and the man who was cleaning the omnibus before the door was sure of a truss of hay in the loft, if he had nothing else. Next he formed a plan of getting inside the omnibus when it got quite dark, and staying there all night. But soon the horses were led out, and harnessed to it; and, after it had loitered in front of the inn for half an hour, to the great edification of the solitary passenger, who had been assured that it was going directly, it started off for town.

At length the little boy got up again, and pursued his way, taking the left-hand road upon the decision of his remaining penny, with which he tossed heads and tails, to see which route was best for him to follow; and, getting nervously excited, he propounded oracular questions to himself respecting the successful termination of his enterprise, taking his answers from the first names or letters he saw over the shops.

“Shall I be happy by to-morrow morning?” he inquired. “If the first letter on the next shop is O, that shall mean *no*; and if it is an S, *yes*.” He got up to the shop, and looked at the name: it was Wood; and this discomfort of his own creating depressed him more than anything else. But he went on with desperation, biting his under lip, and clenching his hand until his nails left their marks deeply impressed upon his small palms.

When he got to Leytonstone, lights were gleaming from the windows of the different dwellings, and through some

of them he caught glimpses of people comfortably seated at tea in snug parlours. The public-houses, too, looked cheerful, as the bright fires within shone through their red blinds. He was exceedingly thirsty with worry, and somewhat fatigued, and he ventured into one of them for half a pint of porter, which cost him his remaining coin.

"You look pale, little master," said the landlord, who was a good-tempered-looking man, with a green cut-away coat and a red face—a perfect mixture of the natural and conventional host. "Aren't you well?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Freddy, forcing a smile, and trying to look pleasant. "I'm very well, only a little tired. I've walked from London."

"And where are you going to?" asked the man.

This was a terrible question to answer. Freddy looked down upon the ground as his face turned scarlet, and crumpling up the corner of his jacket into his hand, said in a low, tremulous voice, "that he was going home." Little people have a great deal of art, but never the tact to conceal it.

"I fear they don't expect you to-night exactly," observed the landlord gravely. "Whereabouts is your home?"

"Romford," answered the little boy, hazarding one of the few names he knew in the county.

"Well, but this is not the road to Romford, you know," replied the other; "this goes to Wanstead. How did you get here?"

"I'm afraid I mistook the way, sir," said Frederick, with great humility.

"Ah! I'm afraid you have," observed the landlord, shaking his head. "Wait a minute; I think there's a cart in my yard going to Romford before long. I'll go and see; and if there is, the man shall take you."

The host left the bar, and went into the tap-parlour, where several people were drinking. The instant his head was turned, Frederick stayed no longer, but slipped out of the door, and ran up the road as fast as his legs would carry him.

He sped on until he was out of breath, and then he ventured to look around him. He had left the town, and was getting into the open country. It was starlight, and he could see that he was coming near what was apparently a forest. Under other circumstances he would have been afraid to venture alone, and at evening, upon its outskirts; but his alarm at being found out, and sent back to Mr. Snap's, — never reflecting that such a thing could not occur unless by his own information, — drove him on to seek refuge in its coverts. He struck out of the road to the right; and, neglecting in his anxiety to study any objects that might lead him back again, in five minutes had completely lost his way amidst a wilderness of large trunks of trees, holly-bushes, and evergreen shrubs.

Fear, however, now regained its ascendancy, and as soon as he perceived his situation he cried aloud. There was no answer; a dull echo followed the sound of his voice, and then nothing was heard but the gurgling of a little spring that tumbled over some pebbles almost at his feet. There was just light enough for him to distinguish a hollow and large beech-tree close to where he had stopped; and creeping into the trunk, he coiled himself up like a dormouse. He was concealed; of that there was no doubt. But where was he? In the middle of a forest, which his imagination conjured into one of those shocking woods where young princes and ruined merchants always got lost on the same night they left their homes, before discovering some wonderful castles inhabited by beasts, white cats, or sleeping-beauties. In the middle of such a forest; at night, and alone!

Anon the terrible usurped the place of the fairy interest with which he endowed it. He thought of sad murders that had been committed, where the bodies had been buried beneath a tree, which became the haunt of unholy spirits ever after, and threw its scathed and blasted limbs on high, as if appealing to heaven to lay open the dreadful secret it enclosed amidst its roots. Then he thought that this was just such a tree, without bark or leaves, with long, gaunt branches; perhaps there might have been a murder there

— who could tell? and the body was rotting beneath him. Some of the evergreens, too, as they bent their topmost branches to the night-breeze against the star-lit sky, looked like the wailing ghosts of the departed. And next came back a keen recollection of the only corpse he had ever seen, that of an old servant, who had died when he was very little; and he fancied a piece of withered timber lying on the ground a little way off looked like it. He called back the dreary sight in all its terrible particulars. The curtains drawn, and the obscure light of the room, so awfully imbued with the presence of the dead; how he was told to touch the body, that it might not frighten him at night; how cold and strange it felt! And how, in spite of the precaution, it always appeared with the dusk before him; how long it lay by his side in bed, as he quailed and shivered beneath the clothes at the grim phantom; and how dreadful a thing death was, that changed a being he had loved to his most shocking punishment. All these ideas rose before him in frightful images, and well-nigh turned his brain with terror. They were not the spectres of the imagination. He saw them palpably, hideously before him. There was not a shrub or pollard but appeared, in the gloom, endowed with some appalling semblance.

Gradually, however, their forms became less distinct, as intense fatigue usurped the place of terror, and he fell into that state between sleeping and waking, when the attributes of either condition are equally confused one with the other. He thought he was at home, and yet it was in the middle of the forest; and Clara spoke to him in the tree, so plainly, that he started to hear her. And suddenly Gogsley laid hold of him, and pulled him along the roof of the school to the very edge, where he let him fall; upon which he awoke suddenly in affright. But at last everything faded away; and, worn out with fatigue and apprehension, he became alike heedless of cold, hunger, or fear, and fell fast asleep.

CHAP. XVII.

WHICH REVERTS TO THE CHICKSAND COLONY AND ITS
INMATES.

IF there was one day more than another upon which Mrs. Chicksand gave way to the ebullitions of an irritable temperament, it was on Monday mornings, when she ascended with Lisbeth into her own room, and made a haycock of dirty things in the middle of it; at the same time constructing a statistical table, or "list to be retained," by entering the articles in a printed book, chiefly remarkable for containing the names of everything nobody ever wore or used; or accompanying the process by a running commentary, from which listeners, had there been any, might have gleaned much information relative to the social economy of her lodgers.

"Why, my goodness, what is that?" exclaimed Mrs. Chicksand, as Lisbeth, after diving into a large ticking bag, until she was almost as completely hidden in it as a bee in a blue-bell, pulled out a round towel, and sent it across the room like a flying serpent, towards the heap.

"That makes four this week 'm," replied Lisbeth; "I told Mr. Bodle you 'd be in a way about it."

"Mr. Bodle must amuse himself by sweeping his own chimney with my towels," said Mrs. Chicksand. "What can make them in such a mess?"

"He's trying to turn all the black-lead into diamunts," replied the handmaiden.

"Diamonds!" indeed, exclaimed Mrs. Chicksand, with a toss of her head. "I wish he'd turn a little money into his pockets, instead. Well, of all the dirty — filthy — no, I never did! Diamonds, indeed! Mr. Bodle will never make anything else but a great fool of himself. I did say I never would have professionals to lodge with me again; and, when he goes, I never will."

At that instant, Mrs. Chicksand made an inward vow that the following week she would charge Mr. Bodle with

two-pennyworth of milk he had never had, to balance her expenditure. She had learned this clever piece of domestic economy from her father, who once kept a large hotel, and made it a rule whenever anything was broken which he did not get paid for, to charge his inmates all round with a sheet of writing-paper the next day, which, by thus retailing a quire, covered the loss. Mrs. Chicksand was a worthy descendant of this talented man. It was wonderful what a lot of watercresses Mr. Snarry devoured during the summer, without knowing it. And, independently of Mr. Bodle's endeavours to establish diamond mines in the black-lead box, had he given himself up entirely to smelting iron-ore in blast-furnaces, the sixpenny scuttles would not have told up more fearfully than they did, whenever his account got a few days past recollection.

"Bless me!" cried Mrs. Chicksand, as Lisbeth added another article to the heap, "why, what the goodness is that?"

"Them's ink, ma'am," replied the servant, holding up a counterpane, which looked as if it had been used as blotting-paper to a very large letter. "That's Mr. Bodle again — writing in bed."

"And how dares Mr. Bodle write in bed?" resumed Mrs. Chicksand. "How dares he do it?"

"I told him you'd make a noise," said Lisbeth. "He says he must, because he has moments of perspiration. He's been at it again."

And in corroboration Lisbeth displayed a pillow-case, on which was the undeniable impression of some remarkable theme, with variations, intended at some future time to astonish the weak wires of the six-octave square.

"This decides me, then," said Mrs. Chicksand wrathfully, venting her anger upon the list she was completing, by running her steel pen through it.

"I have never had my things in such a state before since Mr. Brooks had the second floor — that gentleman who walked the hospitals, and ran in debt."

"One, two, three, four," said Lisbeth, counting up some towels. "I've heard master talk of him, ma'am."

"A troublesome fellow!" continued the mistress. "I've known him forget to undress himself, and go to bed in his boots twice running. He went away at last, but we'd a world of trouble to get rid of him."

"Had you now, 'm?" asked the servant, who perceived Mrs. Chicksand was suffering from an accession of communicativeness, which excitement generally induced.

"I rather think we had," replied Mrs. Chicksand: "let me see—four towels. He gave a party the evening before he left, and his friends stay'd all night. When they went in the morning, they rammed bits of tobacco-pipes into all the keyholes of the house."

"Dear me!" observed Lisbeth, with an expression of alarm. "And how did the other families get out of their rooms?"

"There it was," said Mrs. Chicksand; "they couldn't. Mr. Chicksand was obliged to go for the fire-escapes, and let them down into the street out of the windows. I never shall forget it as long as I'm born—no, I never shall. What capital things those escapes are when a house isn't on fire!"

The enumeration of washables had nearly concluded, and Lisbeth gathered them up into one enormous bundle, to be kicked down stairs before her into the passage, and there wait until the man called.

"Now, mind what I say," remarked the mistress. "I won't have Mr. Bodle take any more jack-towels to make diamonds of. If he asks for one, tell him I say that he sha'n't have it, unless it's to hang himself with. Then perhaps he'll be offended, and go. Ah! I hear you."

The last words were playfully addressed to nothing in particular, but intended to apply to Mr. Bodle, from whose room proceeded musical sounds of an elaborated and continuous nature, that showed the piano to be in the last stage of suffering, and by its violent internal grumbling led people to think involuntarily of tincture of rhubarb, bottles of hot water, and powdered ginger.

As Mrs. Chicksand descended the staircase, Clara met her at the drawing-room door, and asked her to step in

for an instant. The hostess immediately acquiesced in the wish. Mr. and Mrs. Scattergood were both from home, and Clara was a great favourite with Mrs. Chicksand, so she anticipated a long talk, which she was ever ready to indulge in.

But this conversation was not of a particularly diverting nature. After a few domestic inquiries respecting the state of the larder, and the probable store of bread in the safe, Clara told the landlady that she thought the bill might be put up again for one of the bed-rooms ; and she said this with such a melancholy expression, that it induced Mrs. Chicksand to hope nothing unpleasant was about to happen.

"Oh, no," replied Clara ; "at least I hope not. But I shall be able to tell you more about it when papa and mamma return."

"Have you heard of Master Frederick lately, miss ?" inquired Mrs. Chicksand.

"Oh, poor little fellow, yes," returned Clara. "He wrote yesterday ; but I am afraid he is very unhappy. It was a sad, gloomy letter, filled with wishes to come home. I must get mamma to go and see him."

"Everybody has their troubles, miss, as I tell Mr. Chicksand, when the wooden pegs in his boots run into his heels. There's skeletons in everybody's houses, only they don't show them to visitors. I'm sure I have enough to put up with."

"I suppose your lodgers sometimes give you a little uneasiness," observed Clara, feeling called upon to make some sort of remark.

"No living soul can tell but Mr. C. and me, no more than nothing that ever was," answered Mrs. Chicksand. "I shall never forget the foreign gentleman, who took this very room in which we stand, and gave a reference to a high French nobleman, whose house we could not find. To think, one day he ordered a broiled mackarel when he went out, and never came back again ; but took away my husband's blue macintosh and the sugar-tongs."

"But did he not leave any luggage ?" inquired Clara.

"He said it had to come through the Custom House; but, as it never came, we suppose it was too large. And when I recollect that very day I showed the second floor to Mr. Snarry, with a bursting heart, at ten shillings a-week, who took the mackarel off my hands, and has occupied it ever since. A nice gentleman Mr. Snarry is, miss, and often asks about you."

"I am very much obliged to him for his attention," replied Clara. "He appears a quiet well-conducted person."

"Oh, but he's full of fun, miss; full of fun, though you wouldn't think it," replied Mrs. Chicksand, as if she thought Clara had spoken reproachfully of him. "What I says is, that you may soon know the real gentleman by what he eats," continued the landlady. "For vulgar people pinch and screw, and starve on chops alone; but well-born lodgers love a joint, and never see it twice."

And, delivering herself of these opinions, Mrs. Chicksand released the door-handle from its five minutes of bondage in her hand, and went down stairs.

CHAP. XVIII.

VINCENT IS LED BY MR. BOLT TO THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE.

IN a few minutes' time from leaving the hill, Vincent and his friend had made the journey of Tower-Ditch, as far as the thoroughfare outside the rails allowed them, and arrived at the edge of the river. They then passed some tall warehouses, which in the gloom of the evening appeared to rise to such a height that their summits were no longer perceptible, and turned into a street running parallel with the banks and wharfs of the Thames.

It was a curious locality they now entered; neither land nor water, but a chaos of both. Indeed it required a little consideration to state truly which it most belonged to. For the houses in most cases ran out into the river on

piles and embankments, built as much on the Thames as the dry ground : and the ships, in return, appeared to have forsaken their proper element, and walked over high walls into large inclosures amidst the warehouses, from which their bowsprits projected strangely over the road, as if they were about to sail forward on the land, charging and knocking down all the elevations that stood in their way.

There were numbers of odd, unnatural bridges, too, at various parts of the thoroughfare, that felt when you walked over them as if they were constructed so as to tumble down suddenly, and by dividing in the middle, let you into the dark noisome water below, without a chance of ever being seen or heard of again. Or, if you escaped this fate, there were deep and narrow spines of iron running across their entire length, to trip you up, and cut you in half when you fell down upon them. Then came more warehouses, not only in the street they were passing along, but stretching away on each side of bye-lanes, with cranes along their upper stories, which sometimes blew round in the night wind, and looked like so many gibbets waiting the arrival of their occupants. And the few people passing backwards and forwards were as amphibious as the quarter they traversed. In the day-time it would have been difficult to have said whether they were carmen or sailors, and at night the identification was lost altogether.

"Now, I reckon you may be trusted," said Bolt to Vincent, as they pursued their way. "All you've got to do is to hear, see, and say nothing. Open your eyes, and shut your month, and see what we shall send you."

Vincent promised compliance, as he wondered where the journey was to terminate. At last Bolt turned down a narrow alley between two stores, and came to the water-side, at a dilapidated hard, or landing-place, which ran out into the water from a ruinous old wharf at the back of one of the stores. He crossed a few barges that were lying off the shore, in a state of torpor, giving an occasional grunt, as if perfectly content with their heavy inactivity,

when they chafed against each other ; and bidding Vincent be careful where he trod, in the obscurity, at last seized a rope, fastened to one of their tillers, and dragged a boat to the side.

“ Hold hard ! ” he cried, in a low, hurried voice, as Vincent was about to enter it, agreeably to his commands. “ Jump down into the barge. The police is coming.”

He crouched down as he spoke into one of the compartments of the lighter, and Vincent followed his example. The regular sound of oars as they feathered in the row-locks came nearer and nearer : then voices were heard close to the barge. These passed, and were again lost in the distance.

“ I wonder what they’re about now ? ” inquired Mr. Bolt, as he raised his head cautiously above the gunwale of the barge. “ No good, I’m afraid. They’re a bad set, them police, depend upon it.”

And he said these last words with a reproving shake of his head, as if he looked upon the executive body generally as men of sinister pursuits, not to be trusted. As regarded his own affairs perhaps they were not.

As the sound of the galley died away, Vincent descended into the boat, followed by Bolt, who took the skulls, and pulled off down the river. He did not appear anxious, however, to keep in the middle of the stream, but chose the smaller thoroughfares behind and between the rows of shipping anchored in the pool, calling Vincent’s attention every now and then to different vessels, whose economy he seemed to be perfectly acquainted with.

“ Do you see that schooner ? ” he inquired, pointing to a particular ship. “ Well, if you get into any trouble within a day or two, go quietly aboard of her, and you’ll be all right. She’s always got that little glim alight at her stern ; and so you’ll know her anyhow. Keep it in mind.

At length he shot suddenly across to the Surrey side, and guided the boat towards a house at the water’s-edge, at one of whose windows a candle was burning, apparently by way of signal. A sort of penthouse overhung the river but a few feet above it at high-water, and the boat was brought immediately under this. Bolt then pulled a piece of rusty chain, which hung against one of the supports,

and gave a peculiar tremulous whistle. It was repeated from above, after a moment's pause; and then the end of a knotted rope fell down upon the boat.

"Now follow me," said Bolt. "I reckon you're a good hand at climbing; only make sure of both your hands or your feet before you move either. Wait till I am clear up."

To follow his companion was not a task of much difficulty, and Vincent soon crept through a species of trap in the floor, and gained one of the rooms of the tenement.

It was evidently the tap-room of some low public-house that overlooked the water, with an entrance from the river-side street. Ten or twelve people, male and female, were assembled there; some drinking, others smoking and playing cards, but all of suspicious exterior; indeed, one or two, in the dress of pilots, with rough blue coats, and glazed "sou'-westers" were absolutely ruffianly. They stared sullenly at Vincent as he entered; and then resumed their pipes, with the smoke from which the room was almost choked up. Some long, foreign-looking bottles, similar in appearance to that which Vincent recollected in the waggon by which he had arrived in London, stood on the table; and both the fumes of the room, and the rough appointments of the table, showed that spirits were more patronised than beer by those who used the house.

"My friend, Mr. Vinson," said Bolt, by way of introduction for his companion; "one of us, and no mistake."

"Glad to see you, sir," replied one of the guests, offering his glass. "Take a drain to our better acquaintance. I think we've met before."

As Vincent took the proffered grog he recognised in its owner the driver of the waggon, whom Mr. Bolt had aided in raising the tubs of spirit from the ice, on the evening before alluded to: and he now began to see through the pursuits of the society.

"I hope the gen'l'man is well, too, though I don't know him, leastways as I knows on," exclaimed another of the company, in half-intoxicated accents, advancing towards him,—a bloated-looking fellow, in the costume of a cab-stand waterman.

"What, Tubs!" cried Bolt; "are you back again? How are you, old fireplug?"

"How ought I to be, after paying a fortnight's visit to the mill at Coldbath Castle? and all the while I worn't the one."

"No; very unlucky, Tubs," returned Bolt, in tones of mock-commiseration. "It never is the one as the police catches; it's always the other gentleman as gets away. But how are you after your confinement?"

"Just as well as can be expected," replied the other. "I'm afraid I took a little too much water there; that New River tap don't do a man much good."

"No; it's too strong to be took by itself, I know," replied Bolt gravely, which produced a hoarse laugh from the rest.

"I'm afeard you're looking for a seat, sir," continued Tubs, addressing himself to Vincent. "Here's a bucket—my stock-in-trade I calls it—quite at your service."

"It's very comfortable," said Vincent, unconcernedly turning the bucket upside down, and sitting on it. "Thank'ee."

"When the plugs is running, or the tide high," chimed in Bolt, "that seat keeps Tubs above water; their seats do the same for a great many members of parliament."

"Good again!" replied the waterman approvingly. He was evidently the prominent man—half buffoon, half butt—of the company. From the club to the pot-house his fellow is always to be found, although in different phases.

"Come, give us a speech, Tubs," said Bolt; "open the Rotherhithe parliament."

"That's just what I was going to do when you come in."

"Well, go on!—a speech!—a speech!" cried the others, knocking their hands on the tables.

Tubs, who appeared only anxious to be asked, and did not take much pressing, got on one of the tables, with the assistance of Bolt, so that his head almost touched the ceiling, and taking a pewter-pot of brandy and water in one hand, whilst with the other he made a pipe trace imaginary problems from Euclid in the air, thus commenced,

"Gentlemen and ladies —"

"Ladies first," observed Bolt, interrupting him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," continued the orator, not offended. "The last sessions having terminated in the acquittal of several of you, much to your surprise, I thank you for this measure you have brought forward, in the discussion of which I have great satisfaction."

There was a murmur of approbation.

"I continue to receive," Mr. Tubs went on, "the most flattering assurances of support respecting the disposal of anything we may find by chance, from the different natives of Rosemary Lane.

"With respect to the Union, what I have to say is, that I hope we may never get into it, whilst the hospitable doors of Her Majesty's gaols is open to all deserving characters.

"Gentlemen upon short commons,

"I have directed some supplies to be laid before you, which I shall be happy to join, and not offended in being asked. And I prorogue this parliament until whenever you like; first asking the member as has taken his seat this evening what he's going to stand."

As Mr. Tubs concluded his address he looked towards Vincent, in expectation of an answer.

"Mr. Vinson will do whatever is proper," observed Bolt.

"Oh, of course," returned Vincent. "Send for what you please."

"Mr. Vinson's a gentleman," said the waterman. "Whenever you turn to the temperance, and want a go of water, come to my stand, and you shall have it. There's a plug in the post at the corner."

Fresh liquor circulated, and the conversation became general, although it was full of allusions in a strange language, and mostly unintelligible to Vincent. At last the landlord informed the guests that he was about to close the house; upon which the majority of them took their departure, including Mr. Tubs, leaving Vincent with Bolt, and two of the seafaring-looking men whom he had first noticed.

"Now they're off," said Bolt, as he listened at the door

until all appeared still, 'I'll tell you what we want you for. Are you willing to make a good bit of money with a little trouble?'

"I ask pardon," growled one of the other fellows; "but, before you lets all out, Cricket, are you sure of your man?"

"Should I have brought him here if I hadn't been?" replied Bolt shortly. "Now, look here, Vinson,—we'll drop the 'mister' to save time — there's a chance of us coves getting rich without trouble. Would that suit your complaint?"

"It depends upon the way it's done in," replied Vincent. "I believe I can turn my hand to anything."

"Well, I'll out with it, then," said Bolt: "here goes! The truth is, we have a crack coming off to-morrow night, not a great way from the coast, and we want your help."

"What?" cried Vincent sharply, with a suddenness that made the others start—"You want me to join you in a robbery? Thank you; but I not quite come to that yet."

"I thought the gentleman was proud from the first look of him," observed one of the mariners, with no very pleasant expression.

"Hush! nonsense!" replied Bolt. "Now, look here, Vinson. If you thinks we want you to go and break open a house, and carry off the swag yourself, you're wrong; it's no such thing."

"Well, what on earth is it then, you wish?" asked Scattergood in return.

"Why, I don't think you'd object to save three fellow-creeters from the gallows," said Bolt.

"I wish you'd drop all this damned mystery, and come to the point," exclaimed Vincent. "What is it you wish me to do?"

Mr. Bolt walked quietly to the door, and then inspected the room very carefully, as if he was suspicious of listeners lurking inside the very pewter measures. He then said to Vincent —

"Whether you are with us or not, the crack will take

place. If we get well off, very good ; if not, and we find ourselves in a mess, I don't see how it can harm you to be lying off the coast in our skiff, to put us across the river. Eh ? ”

“ I would rather not,” replied Vincent. “ I think you might get somebody else.”

“ Nobody as could manage so well, I reckon,” replied Bolt.

“ And whereabouts is it you wish'd me to be ? ”

“ Anywhere along the banks of the river, that will give you the shortest line to Brentwood, for the house would lie on that trade. It's called Blazes, or Babel, or Brabunts, or something like it. Why, what's up now ? How you jumped ! ”

“ Brabants ! ” ejaculated Vincent, almost unconsciously. Then, recovering himself, he added, “ Me ? — oh no, nothing. The name struck me. I think I have heard it before.”

“ Well, may we trust you ? Will you be there to-morrow ? ”

“ I will,” said Vincent earnestly. “ I give you my honour, if you set store by such a thing.”

“ Oh ! honour amongst — gentlemen like us, in course,” said Bolt.

The conversation finished, Vincent rose to depart. He was shown out of the front-door by the landlord, who fastened it up carefully after him.

He waited in the streets for a few seconds, undecided what plan he should adopt, and then turned down a dark alley at the side of the house, which slanted down to the Thames. The tide was running down, so that he was just enabled to creep along the edge of the water upon the wet shingles to where Bolt's skiff was still lying. Hastily unfastening the cord which held it, he launched it into the stream, and in another minute was pulling vigorously down the river, in a manner which betokened long habitude with the management of a boat.

The morning broke cold and foggy ; the banks on either side were almost invisible in the dull grey light ;

whilst huge colliers were floating lazily on the tide, looking in the mist like phantom vessels. But Vincent was still at his task, and by the first gleam of sunlight had placed several good miles between the Pool and himself, in his course down the Thames.

CHAP. XIX.

MR. JOE JOLLIT BECOMES JOYOUS AT GRAVESEND, WHERE
MR. SNARRY RELIEVES HIS MIND.

FINE weather crept on as soon as blackthorn winter was over, and its effects were speedily visible upon the whole creation. Everything prepared to welcome the summer; and, simultaneously with the change of the caddis-worm into the mayfly, Mr. Joe Jollit discarded his winter toilet, bought a gent's Zephyr Cachucha, which was a great coat of thin oatmeal-coloured blanketing, and, to use his own words, "burst forth into light and life, and delivered himself up to the *abandon* of rural pleasures." This desirable occupation was chiefly brought about by hiring a bed-room in Windmill Street, Gravesend, whither also Mr. Snarry accompanied him, to the grief of Mrs. Chick-sand.

And wonderfully popular with the passengers and officers of the Topaz steamer did Mr. Joe Jollit soon become, even to being permitted to climb upon the paddle-boxes, and walk along the bridge that connects them; and his general manners were so diverting, that Mrs. Hankins's sister, who once went down by special invitation, under Mrs. Hankins's own chaperonage, so that it was impossible for the world to say anything at all about it, declared that her inevitable death would of necessity result from his pleasantries, and would be laid at his particular door, if he persisted in being so atrociously droll. What a strange animal he was!—did Mrs. Hankins ever?

Whatever were the materials to work upon, Mr. Joe

Jollit's keen sense of the funny never forsook him. Whether he played an amateur obligato to "Love not," which the band on board performed unceasingly, upon the trombone of the man who went round with a faded decanter-stand to solicit coin, or whether he asked the steward at dinner for half a pint of that peculiar old port which had been two days in bottle under the cabin stairs, or the celebrated madeira which had voyaged to Gravesend and back to improve its flavour, he was equally rich. And when he landed, he gave such full play to his facetious spirits all the way from the pier to his lodgings, that even the drivers of the many-fashioned vehicles who wait to carry timid visitors, by sheer force, and against their will, to Rochester, Canterbury, or wherever else it pleases them to transport their helpless victims, gave up chaffing with him in despair, and no longer paid any attention to his desire that they would take him "as far as they could towards Nova Scotia for a shilling." These little ebullitions of a joyous mind at first alarmed Mr. Snarry very much, until he saw that no great harm arose from them, when he enjoyed them as much as his friend; always excepting such times as Mr. Jollit chose to buy a small quantity of periwinkles, and eat them with a pin as he walked upon the pier at the fashionable time of day, for the purpose, as he observed, of making the world understand that there was nothing like pride about him, and forcing Snarry to feel quite at his ease, and at home, even in great society.

If there was one locality upon earth more than another in which Mr. Jollit allowed his spirits to be boundingly joyous, it was within the chalky confines of Rosherville Gardens; and one fine afternoon, in extra good-humour, he was pressing the greensward of that terrestrial paradise, in company with his friend. It was really a thing to see — Mr. Jollit's deportment at Rosherville: something a person might walk a long way on a hot day, in tight boots, to behold, and not feel disappointed after all. His first funniment took place amongst the macaws, when, after addressing them in their own peculiar language, until he set them all shrieking, he would thrust his hands into his

coat-tail pockets, and bending his body at a right angle, hop about the lawn in the manner of a large raven. Next he would visit the monkeys, and sitting on a rustic stool opposite to them, would imitate all their actions, and eat a bun after their manner, occasionally stopping to run round the stool upon all-fours, previously to scratching his side rapidly with the extremities of his nails. And his dialogue with the distinguished foreigner who lets out the arrows at seven for twopence, was also a great diversion, being carried on in strange tongues, chiefly of the cabalistic dialect used by conjurors, and always ending with the phrase, "Tres-bien-voulez-vous-propria-que-maribus-paddy-whack," which, not admitting of refutation, usually finished the conversation at once.

Nor was Mr. Joe Jollit one whit less humorous when the quadrille-band struck up in the baronial barn, for the amusement of those whom the bills call "the votaries of Terpsichore;" for then he danced literally on the light fantastic toe, especially as the *cavalier seul* in La Pastorale, for which he reserved all his powers. Sometimes he sprang from the earth, turning round twice before he came down again; at others dropped on his knee, in a graceful attitude, before his partner; and, when particularly hilarious, he would lay hold of his coat-tails, which always played a great part in his eccentricities, in the style that ladies hold their dresses; and then dance a graceful measure, amidst the cheers of the spectators. Indeed, so remarkable was he, that Mrs. Hankins's sister, whom he once persuaded to be his partner, "never felt so awkward in her life—really—the idea—how very absurd, to be sure!" And her distress did not terminate with the quadrille; for when they went to one of the side tables for refreshment, which consisted of shrimps and ginger-beer, Mr. Joe Jollit struck out a new line of humour, and commenced imitating fire-works with his mouth, until he broke two tumblers in his endeavour to personify a Catherine-wheel in full play.

"I say, Snarry, old fellow! you're down; what's up?" said Mr. Jollit to his friend on the afternoon in question.

A melancholy "Nothing," which belied itself was all the reply.

"I should think so: you look as if there was not," returned Jollit. "Why don't you be jolly? — I am. I'll jump you for a bottle of stout. Look here; can you do this?"

The incidental performance consisted in holding his walking-stick in each hand, and jumping over it, first forwards and then backwards. It was a stick, with a knot made like an old man's head, and very crooked and deformed; just the sort of stick you would imagine a funny man always carried, for the sake of society.

"Come, Snarry, don't mope. Why don't you tell me what's the matter?" continued the jocund Jollit, finding that his challenge was not accepted. "I won't say anything about it, you know."

"I'm afraid it is the heart," replied Snarry, in plaintive accents, with a suppressed and quivering sigh.

"What's the matter with your heart? Is it in the Highlands, or breaking for the love of Alice Grey?" inquired Mr. Joe Jollit.

Mr. Snarry shook his head, and looked up to the sky, whose floating glow spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright. Such was his inward quotation as he beheld it.

"Now, what are the odds I don't tell you which pack the card's in?" inquired Mr. Jollit. "I mean whereabouts your thoughts are. You are thinking about that little girl with the long black hair on the first floor."

"I am afraid that it is so," replied Snarry, with plaintive mournfulness. "Jollit—my friend—you will not betray me?"

"Never!" returned Mr. Joe, with dramatic energy. "Only—I say, now, Snarry, don't make a fool of yourself."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Snarry, apparently hurt at the possibility of such an imputation.

"Oh, nothing; only those things get on so, somehow or another, especially first loves. Is she your first love?"

"I never cared in this manner for another," replied Mr. Snarry.

"I thought so," said Mr. Joe. "I've had twenty first loves, and know what it is. Let's rest here a little while."

They had arrived at the top of the cliff on which the tower is built, and now rested against the battlements. The view was pleasant, with its diversified prospect of hill and valley, land and river, and it harmonised with Mr. Snarry's feelings. He leant against a buttress, in the attitude of a border warden on the donjon keep; whilst Mr. Joe Jollit, having shouldered his stick, and marched as a sentinel two or three times backwards and forwards, to an air from Blue Beard, threw a handful or two of fine gravel upon a party who were having tea with shrimps, on the lawn below, and then crouched down behind the ramparts.

"I repeat," continued that facetious gentleman, "that you must mind what you are about."

"In which way?" asked Mr. Snarry, half angrily.

"So. A young gentleman meets a young lady that pleases him. Very well: you can't grumble at that. They neither think about marriage. I don't mean, you know, but what they're both very proper; but they don't think of anything at all. Only they appear to suit one another—their notions and ideas, perhaps, go the same way; and, in consequence, the gentleman dangles about after the lady whenever they meet. Perhaps, in her mind, the lady dangles about after the gentleman just as much, but never openly, because it's not correct."

"But what has all this to do with me, Joe?" asked Mr. Snarry.

"Well, that's what I'm coming to. This dangling goes on until the young lady herself, or most likely her friends, think it time to ask something about intentions; and then the young gentleman all of a sudden sees the folly of carrying these things too far. Now, don't you see the fix he places himself in? He has either made a fool of the girl, to say the least of it, or he is hooked, rather against his will, to marry, which is not altogether

to his taste, although he was never so happy as when he was flirting with her."

The lecture was so unexpected from Mr. Jollit, that Mr. Snarry opened his eyes very wide in astonishment.

"I see you are surprised to hear me go on like this," said Mr. Joe; "but I have got into several rows of this sort,—funny men *do* sometimes,—and so I like to warn people. Now, suppose this attachment of yours to Miss Scattergood comes to any thing,—you have not much tin, and it seems she has none at all,—what would you do?"

"A cottage—" ejaculated Mr. Snarry.

"Oh, nonsense," interrupted Mr. Jollit; "that has all been found out long ago. Does she know you care for her?"

"I wished Mrs. Chicksand to hint at it," said Mr. Snarry; "and I sent her bouquets occasionally of geraniums and hot-house plants for her toilet-table."

"Try wall-flowers next time," said Jollit; "they go a great way for a small sum, like an Upper Clapton omnibus."

"But, Jollit," said Mr. Snarry imploringly, "this must remain locked in our bosoms."

"Chests, Snarry, if you please. Never lose a joke if you can help it. Locked in our chests is good. Oh, yes, of course; I shall not say a word about it. Only, if you must be a butterfly, take my advice, and never stay near one flower too long."

"I fear it is too deep," said Mr. Snarry, with another sigh. "The sun is going down over the spot she inhabits," he continued poetically, as he looked towards the transparent fog in the west, that indicated the locality of London.

"Yes, all right," answered Mr. Jollit; "and I think we will go down ourselves, for it is getting chilly. Hark!" he added, as the sound of music, expressing the pursuit of harmony under difficulties, rose from below, "the festivity commences. Now see me take the shine out of the company."

They descended to the ball-room, and Mr. Jollit was,

if anything, richer than ordinary. But Mr. Snarry sat apart from the throng of revellers, as he termed them, and lost himself in meditation until the fireworks commenced, when he again joined his friend. But even then there was not a rocket burst, whose stars did not turn themselves into Clara Scattergood's eyes as they descended. And when he arrived at home, he sat at his window, which looked upon Windmill Hill, and ruminated upon the object of his affections, lost to everything else,—even to the uncertain notes of a flute, which a gentleman in the house used to play in bed for an hour every night before he went to sleep.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAP. I.

FREDERICK ARRIVES AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY.

It was bright morning when Freddy awoke again. Birds were singing around him ; the dewdrops on the grass were sparkling like diamonds in the early sunbeams ; the little perking squirrels were darting from one tree to another, now running along the branches, now just showing their noses from the fork of a bough ; and at various parts of the woodland, tall, undisturbed columns of smoke were rising above the foliage from the cottages. All the horrid creatures that had surrounded him in the gloomy night resumed their natural forms, and became once more simple trees in the cheerful daylight.

He was hungry — very hungry ; but a draught of the clear water, from the little spring that bustled through the forest, was all he could procure for breakfast ; and it served also for his toilet. And then he started off again, feeling somewhat bolder than he had done the night before, but still equally uncertain in which direction he should travel.

He passed two or three gentlemen's houses, where the closed windows showed that the inmates were not yet stirring ; and at last came to a turnpike road. A light covered cart, filled with mats and turnery-ware, was jogging along as he turned out of the bye-lane. The driver was seated in front, singing a song of no very great poetical pretensions, to an air which any one may hear chorused, if he listens outside the tap-room window of a country public-house on Saturday nights ; and he looked altogether so pleasant, that Freddy ventured to ask him for a ride.

"To be sure," said the man ; "I'm sure you must be in a hurry, to get up so early. There," he continued, as he helped the little boy up from the step to the shaft, "sit down on this mat. Where are you going ?"

"Just out there," answered Frederick, making an arc of about twenty miles with his finger, across the horizon.

"Well, you must have a good deal to do when you get there, I'm thinking," replied the man, "if your connection covers all that ground. You hav'n't even had time to get your shoes blacked — have you ?"

Freddy began to shuffle about upon his seat, and looked very uncomfortable. The man could never be a Bow-street magistrate in disguise, that the company of Merchant Tailors had sent after him !

"Now, good boys always tell the truth," said the man ; "and I'm sure you're a good boy, only you don't like your book. Isn't that it? Come, now ; tell me what school you've run away from."

Frederick felt there must certainly be some brand upon his forehead that proclaimed his desertion. He returned no answer, but got very frightened, and began to cry.

"I thought so," said the man. "There — never mind — I'm not going to hurt you. Where do you want to be taken ? — I live at Brentwood."

The name of the place seemed to come upon the little boy as naturally as that of his own family. They had once lived in the neighbourhood.

"And who do you know at Brentwood ?"

"The White Hart Inn," replied Frederick. He had some faint recollection that his father had business there on certain days.

The acquaintance was certainly a vague one ; but it appeared to satisfy the man ; for he asked no more questions, but struck up his song again, beating time with his old whip upon the back of the horse ; and so they went on, until he came to a little public-house, where he got down whilst the horse baited ; and, when he came back, brought Frederick an enormous lump of bread and cold bacon. He was a good-hearted man, and had got children of his own.

It was a long journey ; and the driver appeared to be very popular on the road, for he stopped at every village to talk at the inns, and dispose of some of his things to the small shops ; in fact, it took nearly all day. But at six in the evening they came near the town before spoken of.

A pleasant country-town is Brentwood ; neat and clean, with glimpses of picturesque headlands, and fair green landscapes from the openings of its streets ; and now and then a fine old gable, or venerable gothic window diversifying the less picturesque elevations of some rural architect. And there are few hostelries in England into which a traveller would sooner turn for entertainment for himself or animal than that of the White Hart, whose effigy looks placidly along the principal street from his lofty bracket, secured thereto by a costly gilt chain, which assuredly prevents him from jumping down and plunging into the leafy glades and coverts within view. And when you enter the great gate, there is a friendly look in the old carved gallery running above the yard, which speaks of comfort and hospitality ; you think at once of quiet chambers ; beds, into which you dive, and sink at least three feet down, for their very softness ; with sweet, clean, country furniture, redolent of lavender. The pantry, too, is a thing to see : not so much for the promise of refection which it discloses, as for its blue Dutch tiles, with landscapes thereon, where gentlemen of meditative minds, something between Quakers and British yeomen, are walking about in wonderful coats, or fishing in troubled waters ; all looking as if they were very near connexions of the celebrated pedestrian, Christian, as he appeared in the old editions of "The Pilgrim's Progress."

The man drove up to the inn, and putting Frederick down at the gate, gave him in charge to one of the waiters ; then, telling him to be a good boy, and stay where he was, because he would be well taken care of, went away home.

Three or four years was a great space of time to the little boy, at his age ; but he recollected the master of the inn, and when the waiter took him into a little snug parlour behind the bar, where the landlord was sitting, and

left them together, he disburdened his mind to him of all his troubles, and felt almost at home again. And his confidence was even more restored when the worthy host, after he had listened to his narrative, and seen some of the bruises and weals still remaining from Gogsley's bullying, gave him a comfortable tea, and proceeded to ask several questions about his family, whilst Freddy sat with his legs up in a chair, buried in a huge old shooting-jacket, by way of dressing-gown, and his feet plunged into a pair of slippers, which had evidently been cut down from the shoes of some giant of the former ages, who suffered from corns.

"And so you want to go to Brabants, do you, Master Frederick?" said the host, when he had heard all the little boy had to say. "I dare say there is somebody there who will be very glad to see you. Ah! Miss Amy's not married yet."

"Is Amy Grantham at home?" asked Freddy. "I like her."

"Oh, yes; she's at home, and likely to be so. We used to think your brother, Mr. Vincent, was rather sweet there before he went to foreign parts. Well I suppose it was all for the best: where is he?"

"I have not seen him for ever-so-long," replied Fred. "We have waited such a time for a letter from him."

"There's the chaise," said the host, as it was heard beneath the window. "Now, your shoes are cleaned, and your jacket brushed; put them on, and we shall be there in less than half-an-hour; and I'll send a man to London early to-morrow, with a letter for father and mother, to let them know you are safe; or they will be sadly frightened."

Freddy hastened to comply with the orders; and in another five minutes a rough, smart little pony was trotting briskly away with them towards the old house before alluded to.

CHAP. II.

VINCENT MEETS AMY GRANTHAM, AND GETS INTO TROUBLE
THEREBY.

WE left Vincent Scattergood on the river, rowing in Bolt's skiff with all the perseverance and labour that a desperate case called for — for desperate enough it appeared to him. At daybreak the tide turned, and a heavy current retarded his progress; but he still kept manfully on, and the morning had not far advanced when he came alongside one of the landing places at Gray's Thurrock.

He lingered in the town until the afternoon at one of the water-side inns, not caring to set off again upon his errand until late in the day. But as soon as the sun began to decline he quitted the town, and striking at once into the country, walked on at a smart pace, and soon left the Thames and its banks behind him.

It was a calm and soft spring evening, soothing and tranquil: redolent, too, with every sweet odour that the young earth gave forth from the blossoms of the heavily-laden lilacs, drooping with luxuriance over the road-side path, to the humblest edge-flower that peeped between the budding hawthorn with its new bright leaves, to do homage to the pleasant season. And nature herself was still, reposing in the warm glow of western light, that streamed in a glorious and golden flood over the fresh ground, showered with sparkling daisies and yellow buttercups, which rose from the earth to greet it. The very foliage of the trees appeared to be dozing in its warmth, except the young spring-leaves, which still trembled and twinkled on their light branches in the declining sunbeams.

A different scene, indeed, it was to what he had lately been accustomed to: the flaring poisonous gas, the teeming atmosphere, the pallid, strained, and artificial life that struggled therein for its scantiest means of being, — where every sympathy was deceit and every smile was pur-

chased. And when he had proceeded further on his journey, and come to a portion of the country that he knew well, there was not a green knoll of ground, or tree, or even hedge-row, which did not appear, in its mute expression, to give him welcome, — which did not testify that its fresh verdure was meant as much for him as for the highest and mightiest in the land.

As he walked onward, the hour sounded from the ivied church tower of one of the adjoining villages. It came upon him like the voice of an old friend, or some long-forgotten melody, that had only been connected with the brightest associations ; and its solemn tones, in the evening quietude, bore with it a thousand thoughts of old times and bygone happiness condensed into one thrilling sound. It fell upon his heart in homely unison with chords that had long remained untouched ; it read a lesson of time misspent and opportunity neglected ; of venial errors, now magnified into crimes by the contrast of the repose and purity around him. But it brought with it a return of natural feelings to which he had long been a stranger. His eyes glistened, and the beating of his heart quickened, until giving way to the soft but impressive influence of nature, he burst into tears.

The sun went down, the twilight crept over the landscape, and it was nearly dark when he had passed through the last village on his route ; but at length he saw the twisted chimneys of Brabants — for thither was he bound — rising above the grove that surrounded the house. As he paused for an instant, leaning against one of the field-gates, a strange agitation and incertitude took possession of him — a mixture of desperation and timidity which he had never before experienced.

“Now, guv’nor, what are you looking for there?” cried a voice, which startled him from its proximity.

“Nothing,” replied Vincent to a countryman who was standing on the other side of the hedge.

“Well, we don’t sell it,” returned the man ; “so you’d best move somewhere else.”

Vincent looked towards the speaker, and appeared to recognise him.

“Chandler! Don’t you know me?”

“What! Mr. Scattergood!” exclaimed the man, after regarding him doubtfully for a few seconds. “Dear! dear! who’d ever a-thought of seeing you? well, if I ever!”

A brief conversation passed between them, principally, however, relating to Mr. Grantham and Amy—the latter especially. Vincent learned all he was anxious to know, and then begging the other not to mention that he had seen him, entered one of the pathways that traversed the grove, and there waited for the next two hours, never once taking his eyes from the house.

Lights appeared in the various windows, and shadows moved backwards and forwards on the library-blinds in giant profiles, in one of which he thought he could trace the outline of the only being on earth respecting whom his sentiments appeared unchanged after the various scenes of dissipation and recklessness which had unceasingly followed one another for the last few years of his life. And then, as the hours wore on, the lights disappeared, or gleamed from the upper windows—one, in particular, he knew was Amy’s chamber,—until the solitary illumination in the library was all that remained. Vincent recollected when he knew the family formerly, that Mr. Grantham was in the habit of sitting up to read long after the rest of the household had retired to bed; and he did not appear to have altered this habit.

Leaving his lurking-place, he crossed the lawn, and was approaching the house, when a large dog confined near the porch commenced barking furiously, and threatened to attack him should the chain break, by which, in his exertions to get at Vincent, he was even now dragging his kennel after him.

“Down—down! Hector!” cried Vincent, calling to mind the name of the animal. “Poor fellow, then!—lie down!”

But the dog had forgotten his voice, whilst he redoubled his barking, and efforts to get loose. Vincent hurried towards the window, and as he got there Mr. Grantham, alarmed at the unusual noise, drew back the blind. They met face to face.

An exclamation of alarm burst from the master of the house as he caught sight of the unexpected visitor. He retreated quickly towards the fire-place, and seizing a pistol from above the mantel-piece, presented it at Vincent, inquiring loudly what he wanted.

Vincent threw up his hand as an indication for the other to arrest any further proceeding, and motioned Mr. Grantham to open the window. He appeared to hesitate a few seconds, and then mistrustfully pulled back the heavy casement.

"In God's name, who are you?" he inquired, "and what is your purpose here?"

"I do not wonder at not being recognised by you," answered Vincent; "it is some time since we met, and I have seen much trouble in that period." And, heedless of Mr. Grantham's involuntarily raising the pistol, he stepped over the low sill of the window into the library, flinging his hat carelessly upon the floor.

"Do you know me now, sir?" he inquired.

"Vincent Scattergood!" exclaimed Grantham, as he recognised the intruder. "What fresh career of vice has brought you to this condition?"

"It would be too long a story to tell you now," replied the other; "beyond that, perhaps, you have unwittingly borne a share in its furtherance. I am here to serve, not to annoy you. In a word, there is an attack contemplated this evening upon the house by professed London thieves, and I have come to warn you of it?"

"A robbery!" ejaculated Mr. Grantham, "and how did *you* come to know of it?"

"That is my own secret," returned Vincent; "it is enough at present for you to know that such is the case. You can now do as you think proper to counteract it; and for that end I am at your service. But you have little time to spare."

"I have no people in the house beyond my daughter, and some females," replied the other. "Your brother is a mere child."

"My brother? What do you mean?" asked Vincent, in astonishment.

"The little boy, Frederick; he was driven over here this evening from Brentwood; having run away from school, he was afraid to go home. Have you not heard of it?"

"I was not aware that my family were in England. I thought they were at Boulogne."

"They are in London," answered Grantham; "is it possible you were not aware of this?"

Vincent returned no answer. His brow was knit, and his teeth clenched upon his lip, whilst his loud and hurried breathing betrayed his mental suffering. His family, then, were in London; they had been thus possibly some time, and he was not aware of it.

"And where is Frederick?" he at length asked anxiously.

"He is gone to bed," replied Grantham: "he appears to have been out all last night. You shall see him and learn all to-morrow; at present I will seek no further explanation from you of all this mystery. What must be done?"

"True — true," answered Vincent, recovering himself by an effort. "I had forgotten, for the news was unexpected. Close the window and the shutters; let all appear as still as death."

"It is a starlight night," said Grantham, "and we can see them come from the hall windows. At any rate, Hector will warn us of their approach."

They left the library and went into the gallery which surrounded the hall, taking the pistols with them from the chimney-piece. Nor did it appear that they were much too soon on the watch, for a loud growl from the dog in front of the house, which soon broke into an angry bark, betokened the proximity of strangers.

There was light enough to see any object on the lawn, out of the shadow of the belt of trees; but no one appeared, although the dog kept barking unceasingly.

"They have a suspicion that all is not right," whispered Grantham; "they will not proceed further."

"Hush! what is that?" asked Vincent hurriedly. "There is a noise in the house."

And indeed a low, grating sound, as of a fine saw stealthily at work, was plainly audible, although not in the direction they had expected. It sounded from the interior of the building; and it was evident they had obtained access by some of the offices.

"They will come through that door," said Vincent, pointing to the body of the hall. "Now or never is the time."

He crept stealthily down, followed by Grantham, and they placed themselves in the shadow of the deep chimney-piece. The next minute they heard footsteps, as of men in heavy shoes trying to walk lightly, and indistinct whispers; and then the door opened.

As the first of the gang appeared, Mr. Grantham discharged his pistol full against him. The fellow gave a leap, and then fell down across the door-way; whilst the remainder of the party, three in number, rushed at once into the hall, bearing a lantern with them.

In a second Vincent recognised Bolt, and sprung upon him. Driving him into a corner of the hall, he threw him down, and then said rapidly,

"It is all blown — get off as soon as you can, or you will be taken. Do not lose an instant."

The individual attacked stared at Vincent for an instant in stupefied surprise. But he had perception enough to see how affairs stood; and, as soon as he was permitted to rise, he seized the light and darted away through the door, whilst Vincent returned to the assistance of Mr. Grantham, whose second pistol had missed fire, and who was now carrying on an unequal contest with the other two. They were the men whom Vincent had seen the night before at the public-house on the river.

The noise had aroused the inmates of the house; and one of the servants, whose room was adjacent to the gallery of the hall, having rushed thither in her fright, seized the rope of the alarum-bell, which hung in a turret on the roof, and began to pull it violently, that one or two of the male domestics who slept over the stabling might be summoned.

But at this minute a volume of smoke poured into the hall, through the open door, followed by a strong smell of fire ; and scarcely were Vincent and Mr. Grantham aware of it, in their struggles to prevent the other men from escaping, ere a fierce glare of light burst upon the opposite wainscot, accompanied by the loud crackling noise attendant upon the combustion of dry wood work. There could be no mistake in its portent — the house was on fire ! Bolt had kindled the flame as he departed, with the idea of rescuing his companions in the confusion that must necessarily ensue.

And he succeeded in his object. The instant Mr. Grantham became aware of the fact, he left the men, and rushed with Vincent to the spot. The light had been hastily applied to a closet of firewood under the staircase ; and from the dry, almost rotting nature of the framework, it was already in a blaze.

“ It is the staircase ! ” cried the master of Brabants, in agony, “ and my daughter’s room is at the top ! She is lost ! ”

But he had scarcely spoken, ere Vincent had bounded through the flames, and gained the landing. Breaking in the door with one blow of his foot, he found Miss Grantham hurriedly throwing on her attire, and preparing to leave the room, already alarmed by the noise. She screamed with terror as Vincent entered, and retreated to the end of the room ; but he caught her in his arms without exchanging a word, and again flew down the blazing staircase. It was not the work of a minute — another instant, and it would have been too late.

The bell had alarmed the people of the farm, and they now began to collect rapidly about the house. The servants too assembled, screaming, in the hall, and running terrified in all directions ; and amongst them was little Scattergood, whom the housekeeper was dragging along in her hand. Scared and frightened as he was, he directly knew his brother, and ran to him, calling him by his name, as he clung to him for protection.

Mr. Grantham had received his daughter from the hands

of Vincent ; but, as she heard his name pronounced, she started from her father, and flew towards him, bursting into tears as he caught her in his arms.

“ My dearest Amy ! ” he exclaimed, “ we have then met again.”

For an instant, heedless of the fire, and noise, and the confusion around him, Mr. Grantham stared in astonishment at the greeting. And then the truth burst upon him : his daughter loved, and was beloved by Vincent Scattergood — the penniless outcast, to whom he had in former times, when he just suspected it, forbidden his house. The dissipated reprobate, then,—the confederate of burglars,—was the obstacle to his plans of aggrandisement. In one moment his family pride crushed every other feeling,—gratitude and justice were alike forgotten,—and he directed two of the men who had assembled to seize Vincent as one of the robbers, whilst he grasped his daughter’s arms with iron nerve, and drew her to his side.

The majority of the people had formed a chain from the lake to the house, and were rapidly passing buckets of water from one to the other ; but a few were in the hall, and two of these laid hold of Vincent. Frederick, bewildered with the scene, but yet perceiving that his brother was in trouble, to whom he had always been much attached, wrung his hands in agony, as he clung still closer to him, and implored him to speak to him.

Pale as death, and faint with agitation, Amy seized her father’s hand, and exclaimed hurriedly,

“ For Heaven’s sake, my father, what are you about to do ? Reflect, I implore you, — if you have one thought left for my happiness, I will answer for his innocence. I would, if all the world were against him.”

“ Miss Grantham,” replied her father severely, “ in this case your interference is not called for. His innocence or guilt will be a question to be decided upon elsewhere.”

CHAP. III.

JOE JOLLIT HURRIES MR. SNARRY FROM SPORT TO SPORT,
TO BANISH HIS REGRET.

THE name of the lodger who played the flute in bed, on the second floor of the house in Windmill-street, occupied by the funny gentleman and his friend, was Fipps — Mr. Raselas Fipps. He was a harmless-looking young man, with a long nose ; and his mouth was puckered into a perpetual simper from long practice on his instrument, which gave him a lively expression, although his nature was grave. Perhaps it was this harmless disposition that made him very popular amongst the fairer portion of the visitors to Gravesend, coupled with his musical propensities ; for he knew a great number of ladies. Oftentimes as the benighted traveller returned from Cobham, he heard the dulcet notes of Mr. Fipps's pipe—he was equally great upon the flageolet — floating in the soft and mellow even-tide ; and at a turn of the road would discover Mr. Fipps reclining in a pastoral attitude against a stile, whilst two or three ladies, seated on logs of timber, listened to him in wrapt admiration, and donkeys browsed at their side, in classical grouping. The style of Mr. Fipps's playing was usually ambitious, and of a high school—indeed, he sometimes attempted to grasp such lofty notes that bystanders trembled for his bloodvessels ; but in moments of light distraction he would essay the gay quadrille or popular waltz ; and then, when nobody was by, the ladies would dance a gentle measure upon the greensward, calling each other “dear,” and laughing timidly, as though they blushed to find themselves thus employed, as is their wont on such occasions, from sylvan dances to the first quadrille after supper at evening parties. So that the life of Mr. Fipps might be considered as Arcadian ; and he would have formed, with his fair companions, a sort of drop-scene of the nineteenth century, had any artist sketched them.

During the early periods of their residence Mr. Joe Jollit did not get on very well with Mr. Fipps. He pronounced him "slow ;" and indeed what could be expected from a man who dined every day upon soda water and periwinkles ; for such did the jocular Jollit affirm was the case. And having won an opal smelling-bottle and two mother-of-pearl salt-spoons, at Tulley's bazaar, he persuaded the elegant young lady with the long black curls, who personated the fickle goddess, — anything but blindly, — to change these prizes for an octave flute, upon which he accompanied Mr. Fipps through the wall, in an uncertain obligato. When Mr. Fipps found, that his performance appeared to annoy the other lodgers, he took to playing in bed, making a sort of Esquimaux tent with the sheet, and getting under it, together with his candle — a proceeding which, although advantageous in the aggregate, was, in the abstract, certainly prejudicial to his own safety, as well as that of the house generally. But finding that Mr. Fipps was inoffensive, and put up meekly with messages and conduct of an insulting and pernicious nature, Mr. Joe Jollit pronounced him a good fellow after all ; and they finally got very excellent friends.

Meanwhile, Mr. Snarry became more melancholy, in spite of all Mr. Joe Jollit's recommendations to the contrary. He declared he could not rouse himself ; and if he could not, it was certainly not from a paucity of attempt on the part of his friend to divert him, for Mr. Jollit dragged him by sheer muscular strength to Rosherville every gala night, and even introduced him to the young lady who sang coquettish ballads from an exalted position in the orchestra gallery, between the dances, which was a distinguished honour many gallant hearts sighed for, but in vain. He took him to eat water-cresses at Spring Head, and drink tea at Cobham ; he lured him into sailing excursions and balls upon the Town Pier ; he practically demonstrated to him that the amenities of social life were in force at Gravesend — that nobody was proud, but pleasant and affable — that formal introductions were things unknown, even to the fairer portion of humanity there lo-

cating, but that soft words might be whispered during the fireworks, upon the strength of one or two minutes, acquaintanceship, when all was dark romantic. But the more he took Mr. Snarry into the whirl of gaiety, the more sad did that gentleman become. He preferred lonely walks, and at eventide would start forth to commune with nature, in cloth boots and a blouse ; and, like the lovelorn Arcite, if he heard song or instrument about the house, he would weep without avail, so feeble were his spirits. What between Mr. Jollit's voice, and Mr. Fipps's flute and flageolet, frequent opportunities were afforded him of doing so, which increased rather than diminished his passion ; indeed, he one day wandered into the fields with the intention of weaving a chaplet of wild flowers, only in the first place he did not know how to do it, and in the second, if he had, he could not find any. And so the expedition was a failure.

"I say, Snarry," said Mr. Jollit, one fine afternoon, when his friend returned from a stroll, "here's a lark ! I met Hankins and his wife, and Mrs. Hankins's sister, to-day on Windmill Hill. They came down here on Monday, and they want to get up a pic-nic."

"Pic-nics are not for me," answered Mr. Snarry sadly.

"Oh, nonsense !" said Joe : "I have said we'll join it, so you must try and see Bam to-morrow, when you go up to London. Pratt's safe, I should think, and so's Bodle, if he is not within the rules of Mrs. Chicksand."

"And I," said Snarry, "shall walk into the joyous circle like the ghost of departed mirth."

"Pooh ! pooh !" replied Joe, "you 'll walk into the lobster salad a great deal better. I think we ought to ask Fipps — eh ? He 'll bring his pipe, you know."

"By all means," returned Snarry : "I like Fipps ; he is quiet, and suits my soul. And he has learnt not to believe in happiness."

Mr. Joe Jollit was certainly invaluable in arranging parties. Within two days, he had worked so hard, that he had not only collected twenty or thirty people together,

including several regular patrons of the Topaz steamer, but he had confidentially imparted to each what they were expected to bring. Mr. Fipps he let off cheap, with the rolls and lettuces, in consideration of his musical attainments: Mr. Snarry received hints of bottled porter and British champagne: Mrs. Hankins and her sister agreed conjointly to furnish a pigeon-pie and some tarts, from their own fair hands: and Mr. Bam implored, almost with tears in his eyes, that he might make the cold punch, and dress the salad himself.

Mr. Bam was one of those men who think that the compilation of punch and salad is the great arcanum of life, known to them alone upon the mighty earth. And on the occasion of dinner-parties at houses where he was intimate, nervous people, who bolted by mistake into the dining-room instead of going up-stairs, might always see Mr. Bam at the sideboard, with his cuffs turned up strenuously high, mashing a hard-boiled egg in a crockery-bowl with feverish assiduity, or spooning up the dressing and letting it fall again, for twenty-seven successive times, — that was the exact number; one more or less would have spoilt it, — in order that it might be mixed to the exact point of incorporation. And in making punch, Mr. Bam was so impressed with the grave responsibility of his task, that the attention required in transmuting metals, or preparing the universal solvent, was nothing to it. Delicately exact cubes of sugar were rubbed on precisely chosen lemons: tea-spoonfuls were poured into wine-glasses and tasted therefrom every ten seconds: rum was measured out with medical accuracy, and brandy added with alchemical care, until Mr. Bam, radiant with pride, triumphantly announced the attainment of perfection. And if after that any rash and hapless guest timidly suggested the presence of a little more of anything, he was soon sorry that he had spoken. For Mr. Bam's look of mingled scorn and anger, when he told him that punch once made was immutable, drove him into obscurity, from which he never more emerged. As far as the transmutation and the universal solvent were concerned, Mr. Bam's punch when

he made it at somebody else's house, bore affinity, in a manner, to them. For then it was so strong, that it transmuted previously dull people into amateurs of parlour magic, and imitators of popular performers; and as a solvent loosened the tongues of retiring visitors into the perpetration of comic songs, interspersed with dialogue illustrative of curious states of society, where people were constantly asking one another questions for the purpose of giving smart answers calculated to wound the feelings, or convey the imputation of exceeding mental inferiority.

The anxiety of preparation had a happy effect upon Mr. Snarry's shattered spirits: still more so, when Mrs. Hankins's sister would persist in coming every evening to see if, as a bachelor, Mr. Snarry did not require some little assistance. And in return, Mr. Joe Jollit would intrude at Hankins's lodgings when the ladies set about making the pastry; and was so funny — Mrs. Hankins's sister never knew such a mischievous creature. For he insisted upon superintending the ornamental portion of the confectionary; and even made a piecrust statue of Mrs. Hankins's sister's intended — an imaginary person, — with currants for his eyes and buttons, and a pigeon's feather in his hat, which gave him rather a martial appearance than otherwise. Then he fashioned a dough heart, as a present for Mr. Snarry, to supply the place of his own, lately lost; and the way in which he ornamented the pie with little frogs, and snipped the edge with scissors into fanciful ornaments, required to be seen to be understood.

Mr. Snarry was admitted to these little meetings, and they relieved his mind. For no one could watch the diverting conceits of Mr. Joe Jollit without being amused; especially on the last day, when he once more invaded Hankins's lodgings, and put on an apron and a tall night-cap, with a tassel on the top, which belonged to Fipps, to make himself look like the *chef de cuisine*. And on this occasion he floured the head of the boy who cleaned the shoes and knives with the dredger, and sent him in this state several times to the baker's, to caution them lest Mrs. Hankins's sister's intended should be done too much, or

burnt. And lastly, by clandestine legerdemain, and threatening the life of the aforesaid boy if he ever revealed it, he abstracted the cups from the interior of the two fruit pies, and supplied their places with something very remarkable, sure to produce an effect which would be ruined by premature disclosure. But Mr. Joe Jollit inwardly determined that the pies should be cut by Fipps, — both of them.

At last, all was arranged. Mr. Bam's brother was a surgeon, just setting up in practice in the Borough ; and he kindly wrote medical certificates for all those who required them. Snarry had palpitation of the heart for two days ; Pratt was laid up with any hard name the practitioner liked to insert ; and Mr. Joe Jollit having successively stated that he was labouring under elephantiasis, with the additional infliction of a bone in his leg, and something green in his eye, and an access of "Delirium Threadneedlens," consented to be chimerically confined to his bed with the ever-serviceable influenza.

CHAP. IV.

THE GRAVESEND PARTY OF PLEASURE AND THE FATE OF FIPPS.

THERE has been from time immemorial a conventional notion, that all pic-nic and *al fresco* parties should end in rain and misery. But, on the present occasion, such was not the case, for the weather was lovely, with every prospect of keeping so. The sea-weed in the passage of Mr. Snarry's lodgings was crisp and rustling ; the parasol of the fashionable lady in the gilt alcove on Mrs. Hankins's mantelpiece was raised in token of sunshine ; and, better than all, Mr. Fipps's barometer, which was celebrated for foretelling what never happened, stood at "much rain." On the other hand, to be sure, there was a gala advertised at the Gardens : but there is no rule without its exception, and perhaps the gala might prove that one.

The party was to meet at one o'clock, and then depart for the spot fixed upon, which was about three miles out of Gravesend.

At the appointed hour everybody had arrived, and almost in uniform, — the ladies being attired in lined muslins, with shot silk parasols, and the gentlemen in white trousers and stocks of wondrous luxury, light-blue with gold sprigs being in the ascendant. Mr. Snarry simply turned down his collars, and wore a black ribbon ; whilst the pleasant Jollit, in that absence of pride upon which he so much plumed himself, put on a blouse and straw-hat. Carriages had been ordered for the ladies, and refreshments, under the care of Mr. Hankins and some other benedicts : but Mr. Jollit pronouncing those vehicles, in his own dialect, as “ ramshackled,” proposed donkeys for themselves ; which the others immediately agreed to, with Mr. Snarry at the head, whose forced spirits were such that they approached the hysterical.

Mr. Rasselas Fipps was the last who made his appearance. Joe Jollit had evidently enjoyed the delay, chuckling at it inwardly, as if he were conscious of the cause, which was the case. For the funny gentleman, having risen betimes, had seen Mr. Fipps's glazed boots standing like sentinels at his chamber door, and had wantonly placed in each a handful of live shrimps, which lively *crustacea* were productive of consecutive alarm, anger, and exertion, before the toilet was accomplished, and subsequently pervaded the entire house after their ejection. But Fipps had recovered his usual placidity by the proper time of meeting, having put on another pair, nearly as good looking, but a little older, with a small hole at the sole, from which a species of dusty fire-work shot out every time they were drawn on. And they also, from the same cause, made a noise when he walked, something between a toy-bellows dog and a cuckoo : but this, in Jollit's opinion, increased the hilarity.

The donkeys were led up to the door by the retainers, and followed by a throng of boys, who entered into the proceedings with the highest glee. Funny gentlemen

always want an audience to come out "rich," and these boys were quite enough to draw Mr. Joe Jollit forth, and make him go through a variety of performances, equestrian and otherwise, before he started, amidst the cheers of the spectators. And then bidding Mr. Fipps play something martial on his flageolet, which Mr. Fipps immediately did, with the air of a man knowing he is making a fool of himself, but afraid to refuse, the party set off along Windmill Street, preceded and surrounded by the boys. The steed of Mr. Joe Jollit, familiarly termed "Bottle" by the owner, was so decked with fern, that it looked like Birnam Wood out for a ride; and its hilarious ruler had muzzled its mouth with a strap, placing a short pipe therein, as well as tied a pocket-handkerchief over its head. And there was a mysterious bundle hanging from the saddle, which sometimes moved, as if its contents were uneasy in their minds, or annoyed by each other's society. But nobody knew what these might be. And so was the setting forth accomplished; Mr. Fipps being placed at the head with his music,—a position assigned to him, ostensibly on the authority of Chaucer, for whom he always professed a great reverence; but in reality to bear the weight of the complimentary salutations from the urchins who accompanied the *cortège*. Next followed the Jollit: then Snarry and his friends; and, lastly, the boy at the lodgings, riding in great trepidation, with a hamper slung on each side before him, like kettle-drums, on one of which was stuck a flag, formed by a union-jack pocket-handkerchief tied to the old joint of a fishing-rod, with an orange on the top, the lads cheering round him.

"That's a good idea, Fipps, about Chaucer and his pilgrims," said Jollit, as they got out of the town, and left the boys behind them: "We will call ourselves by their names."

"But we are not going to Canterbury," replied Raselas.

"No more did they, that anybody ever knew of," returned Joe. "I think they all got jolly, and spent their money half-way; or else quarrelled. It must have been

very slow; how could nine-and-twenty people, all on horse-back, hear what one was saying? No, no — crams — depend upon it."

Mr. Fipps thought otherwise. He did not like to hear his favourite author slightly spoken of; but, inspired by the foliage of the country, he murmured:

"'Whanne that April with his shoures sote.'"

"What's 'sote'?" interrupted Joe, maliciously funny.

"Well, 'sote,' you know," answered innocent Fipps: "oh — 'sote' means anything — pshaw! it's Chaucerian."

"I call 'sote' great nonsense," replied Mr. Jollit; "shut up Chaucer, and play a pleasant melody. Something sporting."

Rasselas was very tractable, and immediately struck up the Huntsman's Chorus, which lasted all the way through a pleasant village which they were approaching. And after that, they rode in facetious styles, and instituted practical jokes upon each other's animals, until they arrived at the place selected for the dinner, where the rest of the company had already assembled. It was a sloping wood, with fine old trees surrounding a smooth piece of turf, and a beautiful view at the end of the avenue, framed as it were by the quivering branches.

The ladies, who had been accompanied by Mr. Bam, and the married gentlemen, had not been idle. The cloth was already spread, and the hampers unpacked. Mr. Bam was hard at work at the salad, upon the stump of a tree; and Mr. Hankins was acting as butler, uncorking all sorts of unknown bottles, and tasting each under pretence of seeing what they were. The fairer portion of the company were laying the rolls and spoons in order; and Mrs. Hankins's sister, as soon as Mr. Snarry arrived, lured him into an empty carriage to cut up the cucumber, which took so long doing, that there was no end of pleasantries from the rest when the task was accomplished. At these, Mrs. Hankins's sister smiled and blushed, and looked confused and pleased all at once, in the manner of the lady in the front row of the pit at Astley's, whom Mr. Merry-

man sits down by the side of, for protection, when pursued by the whip of the irritated master of the ring.

Mr. Joe Jollit had provided the cruets, and in a jocular manner, which made great fun ; for the vinegar was in a scent-bottle made like Bonaparte, his head forming the stopple ; and the mustard and pepper in the glass and sand-box of a china inkstand. The salt was in a little cedar lucifer-box with a flapping lid ; and when, as the *bonne bouche*, he produced a blacking-bottle full of brandy-cherries, the hilarity of the party was beyond all bounds ; Mr. Snarry quietly informing Mr. Hankins's sister " that he never knew Jollit so rich."

The funny gentleman retired with the fruit pies for a few minutes, unseen in the excitement ; and when he returned, they all took their places, after such laughing, and spreading out shawls to sit upon, and covering up of pretty ankles and peeping feet ! And then the meal began, and Mr. Joe Jollit came out in proportion. First he balanced a spinning plate on his finger, which finally tumbled down and broke. Then he crawled upon his hands and knees across the table-cloth for a remote roll, preparatory to tossing up three at once, and so arranging that, at the conclusion of the performance, they all fell upon Mr. Fipps's head in succession ; and finally, he fastened the claw of a lobster to his nose, and gave an imitation of Mr. O. Smith in the Bottle Imp, telling somebody he must learn to love him, which was pronounced admirable, especially by those who had never seen the original.

" Now, Fipps," cried Joe, who always followed up his jokes by distracting the company's attention, as is usual with funny gentlemen who labour intensely to be thought off-hand, — " Now, Fipps, what are those tarts made of ? "

" I will tell you directly," said Mr. Fipps affably.

Mr. Joe Jollit entreated the attention of the company by a clandestine wink ; as he added, turning the dish in a certain direction, " Here, this way will be best to cut it ; will it not ? "

The heedless Fipps plunged the knife through the crust, and cut away vigorously ; but he had scarcely done so ere

the whole of the top crust flew up into the air, accompanied by some of the fruit, as if a mine of gooseberries had been sprung in the interior ; and a dreadful image of the nameless one darted up amidst the ruins, to the consternation of Fipps, and the screams of astonishment and rapture of the ladies.

“ There’s a love ! ” cried Joe, as he drew forth the fiend, which was of the jack-in-the-box class, won at Tulley’s, and hitherto tied down by a string. “ Bravo, Fipps ! you managed it capitally ; your health, Fipps. Gentlemen—bumpers, if you please, to Mr. Fipps.”

Applause and toasting prevented Mr. Fipps from saying a word. But he looked paralyzed with astonishment.

“ Never mind, Fipps,” continued Joe ; “ go in at the other. I’ll be bound you have some little new surprise for us.”

“ Ha ! ha ! capital ! very good ! ” said Fipps, with about as dreary a laugh as any one could well conceive.

And assuming indifference, he attacked the second pie, but had hardly commenced, ere Joe, exclaiming, “ Bless me, what’s that ? ” tipped it completely over, and half a dozen live crabs—of the three-a-penny species, which children buy, dry and dusty, in poor neighbourhoods, and which had formed the contents of the mysterious saddlebags—rolled out, and began to scuffle away sideways over the tablecloth. And then, indeed, there was something like consternation amongst the young ladies, requiring all the assiduity of the gentlemen to tranquillize. Indeed, there was a report that Mr. Snarry’s emotion carried him so far as to place his arm—may we chronicle it ?—round Mrs. Hankins’s sister’s waist, and assure her energetically that there was no danger.

Order was at length restored, and they all laughed heartily except Fipps, who did not see the joke ; the less so, in proportion as every one complimented him upon his drolery. But a very shining pair of eyes on his right hand, in whose light he had whilome played the flageolet in the quiet eventide, exerted all their influence to soothe him : and before long he had recovered his wonted serenity, and

was even persuaded into the performance of an anacreontic melody, with variations.

The corks leapt joyously from the long-necked bottles, which, capped with tinfoil, were presumed to contain champagne, or if they did not, something quite as good, which had the same effect, and, if anything, much sooner. The sparkling liquid, alive with tiny balloons, that rose in myriads from nobody knew where, creamed over the edges of the glasses and the taper fingers that held them, and all went merry as a marriage-bell — or rather as that signal of the loo of life in which a good hand is sometimes thrown away for a miss of uncertain advantage, is popularly supposed to go. What a relief from the dusty pavement, and glaring baking walls of the city, was the soft turf and the waving foliage! How every breath of sweet summer air blew the dust and blacks from the lungs! Mr. Pratt, who, not having a lady at his side, lay down in the attitude assigned in the Eton Grammar to ineligible shepherds, as he watched the transparent green leaves quivering against the clear blue sky, thought if ever a bank forgery was venial, it was that which Mr. Bam's relation had passed off upon the governors in the present instance.

"Gentlemen," cried the undying Jollit, "charge your glasses. Come, Fipps, that won't do — no dry toast here!"

The glasses were filled, and there was a moment of expectancy.

"Gentlemen," continued Jollit, "and ladies," he added with fascinating softness, "I am sure the toast I am about to propose will be drunk by you with the liveliest enthusiasm. The individual I am about to mention is one of rare merit."

Here Mr. Jollit's eye rested upon Fipps, who coloured exceedingly; whilst one or two knocked their plates with their knife-handles, not knowing who was meant, but because it is proper to do so.

"In those who have met him before to-day, his name will be sufficient to awaken all their warmest enthusiasm; to those who have not, the manner in which they see the

toast will be received will alone teach them to cultivate his friendship."

Mr. Jollit here looked affectionately at Snarry, who immediately gazed upon the table-cloth, whilst his breast heaved with emotion, as he felt Mrs. Hankins's sister's arm pressed against his own, as much as to say, "He means you."

"His moral worth is only surpassed by his beauty," continued Joe, bowing to Mr. Bam, "and his intellect by both. I can keep you no longer in suspense, for you must have already made up your minds as to the individual in question. Need I say, that it is *myself*? I beg, therefore, you will drink my health with three times ever-so-many; thanking me at the same time for my kind exertions in promoting the festivity of the party."

There was great laughter at the unexpected conclusion of Mr. Joe Jollit's address from everybody except Fipps, Snarry, and Bam, each of whom thought it was himself that drew forth these compliments, and were already meditating a reply. Mr. Fipps had got as far as, "It is with feelings of the deepest emotion and gratitude;" Mr. Snarry had accomplished, "The honour so perfectly unexpected that you have just conferred upon me;" whilst Mr. Bam had resolved to fall back upon the old joke, of, "Unaccustomed as I am," &c. But Mr. Bam was rich in old jokes — especially dinner ones. Tongue. hock, calves'-head, lettus (lettuce), and rum, never escaped Mr. Bam, in common with all men who are great at concocting salad and punch.

The toast was drunk by all, however, at last, with great enthusiasm, and in bumpers, although every lady cried out, "Oh, that's quite enough," as soon as her glass held about a teaspoonful. Mr. Jollit returned thanks, with his hand upon his heart, in a neat and appropriate speech, and then called upon Mr. Snarry for a song. After much pressing, which required the solicitation of Mrs. Hankins's sister's eyes to render of some avail, he obeyed.

We have said Mr. Snarry was of portly figure, albeit

he walked much, was in love, and wore a broad zone of elastic fabric; and therefore he sang with a delicate fluty voice some enamoured stanzas. And thus it is always that those who look as if their notes would knock down the walls of a house, incline to ditties, as tenor as tender.

When this was finished Mr. Joe Jollit still kept the fun alive. He cut ducks out of apples, and made pigs from orange-peel. Then he presented Mrs. Hankins's sister with cherry teapots against she commenced house-keeping; at which Mrs. Hankins's sister said, "Get along, you strange creature, do!" The fruit was a perfect windfall to Mr. Jollit; for he conjured with the cherries also, and wore four as earrings, and tied knots in the stalks with his mouth; and popped gooseberry-shucks upon his hand, which Mr. Fipps could not manage after many attempts; and was altogether the life and soul of the company, — more especially in his taking an orange and imitating the invalid traveller on board the steam-packet, by artful incisions, and subsequent compression. And, finally, he proposed a dance.

Mr. Fipps was forthwith elevated on the stump of the tree with his flageolet, and told to play unlimited quadrilles. The first set was soon formed, the ladies taking off their bonnets, one of which Mr. Jollit put on hind side before, and disported therein merrily; plying Mr. Fipps with strong beverages between each figure, to make him play with spirit. And this he did, until the exertion, the excitement, and the sun combined, threw his notes into great confusion, and produced that vague melody common to an overworked musical snuff-box when its barrel has shifted halfway between the two tunes.

And so the day went on, to the joy of everybody. But everything must have an end, from a quartette at a classical concert downwards; and although Mr. Snarry apostrophized the shades of evening to close not o'er them, day began to decline. The things were packed up, and they mustered their party to return; when, to their discomfort, Fipps could not be found.

A search was immediately instituted, and the company

dispersed in various directions, until a cry of joy from Mr. Jollit drew them to one particular spot. And there, in a romantic hollow, reclined Mr. Fipps, with an empty champagne-bottle by his side, still trying to evoke sweet sounds by playing at the wrong end of his flageolet. His first statement was, that everything was right: his second that he believed in happiness. It was therefore thought advisable to place him in one of the vehicles, with the boy to look after him, whilst Mr. Jollit insisted upon riding postillion. The passengers were transferred to another carriage, and this made more fun; for they were crowded for room, and the ladies were compelled to seek such accommodation as they could obtain, which Mr. Snarry observing, prevailed upon Mr. Hankins to change places with him, and then squeezed in amongst the rest, very close to Mrs. Hankins's sister.

The journey home was not less pleasant than the coming; and when they arrived, Mr. Fipps was taken in solemn procession to Mr. Bam's lodgings, and there placed to rest, with severe instructions to Mr. Bam's boy that, when the gentleman awoke in the morning, and asked where he was, he should be told in the Tower of London upon a charge of high treason, and then locked in his room until they came to release him.

The married gentlemen retired to their homes; but the bachelors resolved to make a night of it. Long after Gravesend was wrapped in slumber, sounds of conviviality broke forth from "The Falcon," amongst which Mr. Joe Jollit's voice was ever prominent, and even Mr. Snarry became wildly excited, and forgot his deep attachment. But the next morning came, and with it the early steamer from the Town Pier; and then the steward found a record of the past hilarity in the diminished quantity of eighteen-pences from those who, hitherto, had patronised his rolls and coffee with constant uniformity. One or two pint-bottles of pale ale but ill compensated for the deficiency.

CHAP. V.

CLARA SCATTERGOOD OBTAINS A "SITUATION" WITH THE
CONSTABLES.

ON the very day that Freddy ran away from Merchant Tailors', but before his absence from the house of the Rev. Mr. Snap was made known, another separation took place in the family of the Scattergoods.

Looking to the limited circumstances in which they were at present placed, it had been Clara's intention, from the first day of their arrival in London, to seek some occupation which might enable her to maintain herself in some degree independent of the others; and this object, as far as she herself was concerned, was never lost sight of. But even the situation of a governess, unpromising and slightly lucrative as it was, was difficult to be obtained; for many hundreds besides herself were striving for the same thing. Advertisement after advertisement was inserted in the papers, but without bringing any suitable answer. Her name was entered at registry offices where the same placard, exposed in the window, contained the names of governess and scullery-maid, the alpha and omega of those who were anxious for employment, — and still to no purpose. And she received little assistance from her parents, it being scarcely within her mother's province to exert herself to that effect; whilst Mr. Scattergood set out each morning, as usual, apparently with the idea that some advantageous offer would be thrust upon him as he walked along the streets, and each night returned no nearer fortune than when he started forth. But he unvaryingly asserted that everything would come in good time, and that there was no occasion to hurry.

At length, through private recommendation, which, after all, is what these endeavours usually depend upon, an apparently advantageous situation presented itself. With some little trouble the father was prevailed upon to make the necessary inquiries; and, finally arranging everything,

it was decided that Clara should, for the first time in her life, leave home, and go as governess in the establishment of the Constables, who were friends of a former connexion of her own family; and the engagement was pronounced a rare and eligible opportunity.

The Constables resided in Fitzroy Square, a locality of the metropolis which subsists chiefly upon its past grandeur. A singular place is Fitzroy Square. It reminds one of a decayed family struggling to keep up appearances upon small means and former greatness. You can fancy all the starched, formal houses, containing carefully-preserved articles of furniture, which had once been very good: too ancient to set off a room, but not old enough to be fashionable—a most unpleasant medium. The buildings look with the same contempt upon the turmoil of the contiguous New Road as the venerable oaks of some country estate do upon the noisy clattering line of railway that intrudes upon their majesty; and the carved stone-work, and grave, heavy roofs of the houses, seem shrinking with disgust from the flaunting cement eagles, composition vases, fancy monuments, and zinc chimney-pots that enliven the borders of the neighbouring thoroughfares.

The name of the Constables will not be found in the Royal Blue Book if you look, and so the trouble may be saved. But they were “most nice persons” with many of their friends, for all that. Mrs. Constable was of excellent family,—at least so she said,—and kept up her husband’s genealogy upon its credit, always telling wonderful tales, without plot, interest, or termination, about her own relations. For Mr. Constable’s ideas of his great-grandfather were more vague than ancestral. There was a “Conestable,” to be sure, in the muster-roll of Battel Abbey; but he could make out no authenticated line of consanguinity with that family. He could go back two or three generations, and the other came down twenty or thirty; but then there arrived an awkward hiatus, in which all traces were lost,—a thick fog upon the river of lineal descent, which effectually precluded anything from being followed by anything else.

Still the Constables were, as we have said, considered "most nice persons" by a great many who knew them, and chiefly for the following reasons. They kept a carriage, in which they sometimes took their friends round the parks. They visited very few "strange sets,"—by which were implied odd people who preferred agreeable friends to grand ones, without looking to money or position. They imagined nothing could be good, unless it came from conventional shops who studied high prices. They attended to their religious duties in fashionable chapels, well aware that no Sabbath could be properly kept in an obscure parochial church; and that the worship thus paraded before the great world was far more important than the silent religion of the heart, which eligible connexions could possibly know nothing about. They were very reserved; could accommodate the focus of their eyes, like that of a double opera-glass, to any object they wished to see, or pretend not to; and, whilst they considered the good points of their own immediate friends through the lenses in their proper position, they reversed them to look at the excellencies of those not in their circle, diminishing them to an incredible distance. Those folks of vivid imagination who, when they are at a very minor theatre, look at the stage through the wrong end of their glass, and fancy themselves at the opera, will best understand the effect of this optical delusion.

It was with this family that Clara Scattergood, after many vain waitings and ineligible offers, at last found a situation; and a day was fixed for a preparatory interview with Mrs. Constable, before she actually entered upon her new vocation. There were three children—two girls about eleven and nine, and a boy not more than seven; and Mrs. Constable had been particular to impress upon the Scattergoods, as a point of unusual advantage, that she kept a nursery-maid, so that Clara need not expect that anything derogatory to her position or education would be required from her.

She decided upon going alone to see Mrs. Constable, not more from her usual quiet spirit of independence, than

from a wish to save her mother from any unpleasant feelings of her present position with respect to those who might formerly have been in her own circle of acquaintances; and, consequently, she set off from home on the day appointed for the interview. When she got to Fitzroy Square there was a carriage at the door, waiting for some morning visitors; and the footman was talking to the housemaid, who was listening to him down the area, in the position best calculated to bolt away from, as soon as the drawing-room bell should ring. They paused in their dialogue for a minute as Clara approached the door; but, as soon as they heard the kind of knock she gave, went on again, just as if there was nobody there. And so there was in their own minds; for none but nobodies came on foot, and announced their arrival in such a modest manner. It was a timid, faltering knock, to which the very echoes in the hall, accustomed to high society, and a rattling sort of existence altogether, appeared ashamed of replying.

A livery-servant, in an extreme state of plush, opened the door; and perceiving by her deportment that she was not a privileged or dashing visitor, immediately showed her into the library, — a chilly, formal room, looking out upon the leads, with a smoky portrait, in a powdered wig, over the mantelpiece, traditioned to be Roger Conestable, sometime steward of Chiltern, and latterly of Wardour Street, Middlesex: in whose features complimentary guests found a singular likeness to Mr. Constable; which Mr. Constable thought very singular, too; but he never said so. And, having shown Clara into this agreeable room by herself, the footman left her to her own meditations for the next quarter of an hour.

At last Mrs. Constable came down to the library, and poor Clara rose to receive her. The lady was not grand, but rather patronizing; speaking to her in the same haughtily affable manner that she used towards her dress-maker, and husband's distant relatives, who came once a year, in new clothes, and a hackney-coach, to make a call. She even asked after her father and mother; and pushed

her courtesy to inquiring about some other relatives who never existed, previously to recollecting that she was thinking of somebody else. And then she told Clara of the distress she had been in through the departure of the last young woman, who was a perfect impostor, and had, if anything, put the children back in their education: besides which, she had so many strange people about her, who were always writing melancholy letters, that her head at last was much fuller of her own family's troubles than the care of the children. But she had heard a very decent account of Clara, although to be sure she did look rather young to inspire her little girls with respect; however, she was willing to give her every trial.

All this was uttered with a volubility which prevented poor Clara making any reply, beyond an occasional monosyllable. So she sat quietly, bowing her head in coincidence with what Mrs. Constable said, until that lady came to more direct questions; in the course of which she persisted for some time in addressing her in French—more or less correct, but with an imitative pronunciation that concealed the defects of grammar from a casual listener. But the “Paris accent” was evidently a great point with her; and she seemed rather disconcerted at hearing that Clara had learnt the language only at Boulogne. Drawing and music were also spoken of; and finally, she came to religion, which she stated was an important point, as Clara would have to take the children to church every Sunday, and her own delicate health did not always allow her to go—she might have added especially when the morning service had been preceded by the opera, or was to be followed by the Zoological Gardens.

“And now, with respect to remuneration,” continued Mrs. Constable, “I believe no terms were settled. What salary do you expect?”

“I must leave that entirely in your hands, ma’am,” replied Clara, “for I have never been out before. I should be most happy to accept the terms upon which you engaged the last lady.”

“Why, that requires some little consideration,” returned

Mrs. Constable, playing with a ring of keys, and trying to make the little ones go through the big ones successively, for the sake of appearing unconcerned. "You see, not having been out before somewhat decreases the value of your services."

"I taught my brother up to the time he went to school," observed Clara, plucking up courage to throw in the remark, whilst she was fluttering with expectancy.

"Oh — I have no doubt of that," answered Mrs. Constable; "but my children would require a different style of education to what your family might think right and proper."

The blood rushed up to Clara's face, and she crimsoned with anger at this indirect sneer. Fortunately, however, she was sitting with her back to the light, and Mrs. Constable did not observe it. The lady continued —

"Our last young person had five-and-twenty-guineas, but we found that too much. Our out-of-door expenses are necessarily so great that we are compelled to retrench at home. Besides, my friend Mrs. Hamley, St. John's Wood, tells me that many governesses at present will come merely for a home. There are so many families in reduced circumstances just now."

"There are indeed," Clara exclaimed sadly, and almost unconsciously.

"Mrs. Hamley has five children," Mrs. Constable went on; "she sends them all to learn the piano and French, after five o'clock, at sixpence each, the hour. Fortunately, the person who teaches lives near them — some broken-down schoolmistress, I believe. However, to return to the subject of terms, I think I may venture to offer you twenty — if that will suit your views. I will speak to Mr. Constable about it, and let you know his decision by an early post."

Clara expressed her readiness to accept the engagement upon this salary; indeed, had the lady offered her half that sum she would have availed herself of it, in her wish to lighten the expenses of her own family. A double knock at the door closed the interview, and waiting in the hall an

instant, while the fresh morning visitors arrived, she slipped out unheeded in the bustle of their reception.

Poor Clara — how glad she felt at leaving the house ! The dingy foliage of Fitzroy Square never before appeared so grateful — never before seemed to blow as much for the shade of the nobodies outside the rails, as for the exclusive residents who had keys. Even the hot dusky atmosphere came fresh and free in comparison with the air of dependence she had been breathing for the last twenty minutes.

A britska was waiting at Mrs. Constable's door as she left the house, belonging to the visitors who had just arrived ; and a young man was sitting on the box, indolently fly-fishing with his whip on various parts of the horses and harness. As Clara turned from shutting the door after her, for the servant was announcing the callers, she saw that he was looking at her with all the sight-destroying energy which a glass held in one eye is fitted to produce. And so with very becoming modesty, as is the usual plan pursued by decorous young ladies upon similar occasions, she directly placed her parasol in the position best calculated to entirely intercept the gaze of admiring young gentlemen. But somehow or another—it was very awkward—her dress caught on the scraper ; and she was compelled to turn half way round to release it ; when she saw, by the merest accident, that he was still looking at her ; and then immediately finding an object of peculiar and continuous interest in the pavement and cellar roundabouts, she walked rapidly on.

She was passing down Russell Place—a region time out of mind dedicated, with its adjoining streets, to wonderful people of every description in music and the arts—to middle first-floor windows run to seed, for mysterious purposes of light and shade—to plurality of addresses on the doors, and sounds of grand pianos playing ceaseless chords from the windows—to board and lodging upon modest terms for those who love the confines, but cannot afford the centres of the west—when she fancied she heard a quick step following her. It came nearer and nearer ; and then a gentleman wheeled round before her,

and presented a pocket-handkerchief which she saw was her own—a fairy-like, lace-edged parallelogram of cambric with her name embroidered in the corner, by herself. Another glance also informed her that it was the young man she had seen on the carriage at Mrs. Constable's door.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed gently, "but I believe this is your handkerchief?"

Clara was terribly flurried at the unexpected rencontre ; but she took the handkerchief with a smile, and thanked him with her eyes, if she did not with her tongue. The young man hesitated an instant ; he felt that, his mission accomplished, he ought to go away ; and yet he was anxious to say something more. At last he spoke :

"Am I to have the pleasure of meeting you at Mrs. Constable's fancy ball?"

Clara uttered a hurried negative, and then bowing to the polite unknown, walked on in great confusion.

"A fancy ball," she thought ; "it is possible after all I may be there." And then she added with a sigh, "But it will only be as a governess in a family ; and then he would not think of noticing me."

No further incident occurred to her on her way home ; but this little occurrence had been enough to occupy her mind even more than her late interview with Mrs. Constable, or the prospect of her approaching occupation.

"It was very strange that he should come after me himself," thought Clara. "I wonder why he did not send the servant. And to go on talking after he had given me my handkerchief!"

And then she began to settle in her mind that such a proceeding was very impudent on his part ; coming at last, however, to the conclusion, that he was very courteous and good-looking for all that.

A very short time was necessary for Clara to make every preparation for her new situation ; and the day was fixed for her departure. That she felt the estrangement, and somewhat sharply too, cannot be denied ; but she was unwilling that her father and mother should for a moment perceive how her happiness was affected by it ; and so she

went about everything in her usual quiet and cheerful manner, keeping all her sorrow to herself, and only giving way to it when she retired to her own room at night, when she generally relieved her heart by a good long cry before going to sleep. She was well aware how even Freddy's boyish griefs had affected her mother ; and she also knew that her own would be taken more to heart, if she made a display of them, by reason of her advanced age and sense. It was perhaps at this time that she felt the absence of her brother Vincent, as a protector, more forcibly than she had yet done. But it was many months since they had heard of or from him : and her father, good easy man, although indulgent and even-tempered even to a fault, was not one upon whom she could rely, in any business that required energy or decision.

The day arrived, and Clara left amidst exclamations of regret from everybody in the house. Indeed, Mrs. Chick-sand was most loud in her lamentations, having, at the same time, another room thrown on her hands to increase her grief. Mr. Bodle stayed at home all day, for the sake of insisting upon carrying her boxes down to the coach himself ; but then perhaps, this was not altogether disinterested, as he wished to excite a mild pang of jealousy in the breast of the young lady who lived next door, and who was legended to have declined his addresses, upon the authority of Lisbeth.

Clara went alone, for reasons before stated. On arriving at Constable's in the evening, she found the family had gone out to dinner ; but she was expected, and the extreme plush received her in the hall in dignified silence, but condescended to take her things up to her room, which was quite at the top of the house, looking out upon a corroded stone coping, evidently hitherto used as a servant's bed-room, from its general appointments. And here he left her to unpack things, placing a flat candlestick upon the uncovered painted toilet-table, and asking if she wanted anything more, in the most careless tones of compulsory attendance. There was something so cheerless in the appearance of the room, — so strange and heartless in

everything around, that Clara could bear up against it no longer. She had combated her sorrows all day for the sake of those at home; but now the sense of her unprotected and companionless position came upon her with double keenness. She sat down by the side of the bed, and wept long and bitterly.

She was recalled to herself by the nursery-maid knocking at the door, and asking her if she would not come down into the nursery. Anything was a relief to the dreary room, and she followed her down stairs, where her future charges were at tea. The children stared at her for some minutes most attentively; then they began to whisper to one another, and finally to laugh heartily at private jokes, such as little people have generally one with another, but of which Clara was evidently the subject.

The servant was a civil and respectable young woman; she reproved the children, and then asked Clara to join them at tea, whilst her charges regaled on milk and water. The trio were what people term "sharp little things," — precocious children, always on the fidget, the delight of their parents, and annoyance of everybody else, who cannot feel any great interest in their hot-house acquisitions.

"Take your spoon out of your mouth, Master Neville, this instant," said the nursery maid to the little boy.

"I shan't," was the answer. "I don't care for you; do I, Blanche?"

"No," replied the eldest girl; "nor more do I. I hate somebody here. It isn't you, Eleanor; nor it isn't you, Neville; nor it isn't *her*," pointing to Clara. "I know who it is though."

"What's your name?" asked the eldest girl.

"Clara Scattergood," answered our heroine.

"What an ugly name!" observed Eleanor. "Mamma hates people with ugly names. How much does she pay you to teach us? — ever so many shillings, I know."

"Hold your tongue, Miss Eleanor: for shame!" exclaimed the servant.

In reply to this correction, Miss Eleanor projected her

lower jaw considerably, in the manner of a china inkstand, and made a grimace at the nursery-maid.

"You've been crying," said the little boy after looking attentively at Clara. "Miss Wilson, that taught us last, was always crying. Mamma hates people that cry."

"Have you got a sweetheart?" inquired Blanche. "I've got a sweetheart, and Eleanor hasn't."

And these words were repeated over and over again to music, as a song of triumph, whilst the child danced round the nursery.

"My sweetheart's always in the square," she resumed in confidence to Clara. "If you tell, Neville and me will pull your hair. We always pulled Miss Wilson's hair when she behaved bad."

"I hope we shall be good friends," said Clara, with every wish to conciliate.

"Perhaps," said the boy; "only don't give us books. I hate books, and so does Blanche, and so does Eleanor."

And this speech was worked into another vocal performance and incidental dance, only cut short by the announcement that it was bed-time; upon which Clara once more sought her room, to arrange her things in their respective drawers and closets, previously to retiring herself, and with a very heavy heart, to rest.

CHAP. VI.

THE DUTIES OF A GOVERNESS IN A "GENTEEL FAMILY."

It was long before sleep came, and brought its temporary relief to poor Clara's despondency. The cheerless room, —the painful feeling, for the first time, of inferiority and dependance; the unpromising prospect of comfort before her, from the specimens she had experienced that evening; and the sorrow attendant upon this first estrangement from home, with its dispiriting novelty, —all tended to prevent her, for a long time, from finding any refuge in

slumber from her wretchedness. And through the long, dreary hours of night, when all her meditations partook of its gloom, and the merest unpleasantry, that would scarcely have cost a thought of uneasiness in the daytime, became magnified by undiverted thought into an overwhelming misery, her tears fell fast upon the pillow.

She counted every succeeding division of the hours as they rang out from strange clocks in cold, melancholy chimes, until the grey morning twilight stole into her chamber, and the first sound of movement was heard in the square ; and not till then, worn out with sorrow and anxiety, did she fall asleep. But it was only to dream of former happy times, vaguely intermingled, in visionary confusion, with the events of a bright and glowing present ; — cheering phantasms, which only make the waking reality more dejected — *ignes futuri* of the mind, the more resplendent by contrast, in proportion as all around is depressing and hopeless.

She was aroused at half-past seven by the nursery-maid, whom she had met on the preceding evening, and who now civilly came, and offered to assist her in dressing. She then learned it would be part of her duty to make breakfast every morning for Mr. Constable, previously to his departing for the city. For Mrs. Constable's duties to society kept her from rest so very late every evening, that she found it impossible both to sit up and get up, and consequently, the duties of the breakfast-table usually devolved upon the governess. For, of course, the governess could not expect any evening visiting, and might go to bed at eight o'clock, if she wished it, so long as her charges were disposed of, and she was not wanted to be useful before company in the drawing-room.

Clara had not yet seen Mr. Constable. He received her at the breakfast-table with a staid civility, which expressed what he possibly thought, — “ I should be very happy in being polite to you, but the restraints of society must be observed, and my wife would not be pleased at my making you of more consequence than is proper for your situation.” So his courtesy towards Clara began and

terminated in a grave sideways bow, and one or two cold inquiries about her family; after which he took up a damp morning-paper that was lying on the table, and began to peruse it very intensely, paying no more attention to her than speaking when he wanted anything.

The new governess felt cruelly humbled. She could not take breakfast, for there had been only one cup and saucer laid; and she could not help deeming herself almost reduced to the position of a barmaid o. private life, waiting in attendance at the counter, to dispense whatever might be asked for. At length, Mr. Constable finished; and then, with another lateral bow, walked out of the room. His departure was some relief to Clara. She ventured to think about commencing her own meal, and rang the bell accordingly. A servant in plain clothes, with a cotton jacket, apparently higher in command than the extreme plush, answered the summons; and keeping half in and half out of the room, with the handle of the door in his hand, waited to know what was wanted.

"I will trouble you for another cup and saucer," said Clara mildly. She almost felt she was speaking to an equal.

"My mistress always takes her coffee in bed," replied the man.

He was evidently a superior servant, who had lived in families of the first gentility, and knew his duty better than to say "miss" to a governess.

"It was for myself I wanted it," said Clara.

"Mrs. Bingham's laid breakfast in the nursery for you, and the young ladies, and Master Neville," replied the servant. "Miss Wilson always breakfasted in the nursery," he added, in a tone which obviously betrayed the mental addition of "and why shouldn't you?"

And having condescended to deliver himself of thus much, he walked towards the table, took up the paper, and disappeared, leaving the door open behind him, as if it was meant as a hint to Clara to re-ascend to her proper sphere.

This short colloquy let her into the secret as to in what

light she was to be looked upon in the house. Society has the same links in its scale as the animal creation ; and a governess in such a family as the Constables' was evidently considered the connecting tie between the family and the domestics ; but, like anomalous classes generally, either in zoology, social life, or politics, looked at shyly by both the species with which they hold any attributes in common.

The olive branches of the Constable family were seated at the table when she entered the apartment — half school-room, half nursery — where they were generally domiciled, Master Neville being in disgrace with Bingham for having emptied the contents of a small Noah's ark into the slop-basin, for the purpose of seeing whether the camels could swim or no. The children luxuriated upon milk and water ; but there was a black teapot on the hob, which Clara was informed contained the infusion of what the Constable's grocer in Tottenham Court Road — their acknowledged one in Piccadilly was chimerical — recommended to his customers as "good sound family congou, at three-and-fourpence." Neville was yet crying from a recent chastisement, to which Eleanor kept up an accompaniment upon a small musical instrument of three indefinite notes, along the top of which passed a continuous procession of poultry, who ran along a tape out of one sentry-box and into another, with no apparent end beyond the gratification of a cylindrical lady in a round red hat, with a stick in her hand, and who watched their progress with as much interest as the direction of her eyes allowed, which were found to be, upon close inspection, one under her ear, and the other in the centre of her cheek. Blanche was simply trying how far she could poke her spoon into her mouth without choking, and indulging in a desultory humming as she watched the proceedings of the other two.

"There !" cried Bingham, as Clara entered ; "here's Miss Scattergood, I declare ! I wonder what she will say to you now."

"I don't care," said Neville, making a face at Clara which might have been construed into a personation of the

cherubim who blow the winds in old classical pictures of tempests.

"I knew a little boy once," said Clara, "who always said 'don't care,' and was at last eaten by wild beasts."

"No you didn't," replied Miss Eleanor, "for it's in the spelling-books. Oo-o-o-o-o! you're a story, you are!"

"I must tell mamma you have been naughty, I'm afraid, if you don't mind me," said Clara, trying to look as angry as her sweet face allowed.

"Ah! then I know what I'll do, and so does Eleanor, and so does Blanche," returned Neville. Then, repeating the words to the air of the preceding evening, he chorussed, "I know what I'll do, and I know what I'll do, and I know——"

"Silence!" cried Bingham sharply. "How dare you make such a noise!"

"When Miss Wilson told mamma, I hit her in the face with Nelly's doll, and made her bleed," said Neville, with an air of triumph.

"We had more money than she had," said Eleanor, "and we told her so; a nasty cross thing!"

"All our things were better than hers, too," continued Blanche: "mamma said they were. Ah! you hav'n't got a velvet dress, I know. We have."

And in conversation similar to this, with equally pleasant remarks from the "sharp little things," did the remainder of the breakfast-time pass.

When they had finished, Clara, after some trouble, made them get their books, and endeavoured to find out what they knew. Their stock of learning was exceedingly limited, and she was considering what she should first do when Mrs. Constable entered the nursery.

At their first interview the mistress of the house had been, as we noticed, tolerably courteous; but now that Clara was acknowledgedly a governess in her family, her whole demeanour altered to that of extreme distance. The question was whether she was not most polite to Bingham, who was certainly more independent than Clara, received

very good wages, and could leave when she chose, with the prospect of obtaining another place immediately.

"You need not be so particular about their reading, Miss Scattergood," observed Mrs. Constable to Clara, who was turning over the dirty, dog's-eared books, in some perplexity. "French, if you please, and music, I wish to be the chief features in their education."

"I shall learn French, mamma, sha'n't I?" said Neville; "and then I shall know what you mean when you speak French to papa, and don't want us to make out what you say."

"I should like to hear you on the instrument," said Mrs. Constable to Clara: "perhaps you will be so good as to play some tune?"

She pointed to the corner of the room, where an old square piano—a staggering four pounder—was stationed. Clara sat down to it: but the first chords struck were enough to show her what effect would be produced. She played two or three waltzes, whilst Mrs. Constable looked coldly on, with the grave air of a judge, but without any expression of approbation or the contrary. It was a nervous undertaking for Clara to be thus watched; and the wretched jangling piano did not much assist her, so that there was little cause for wonder if she played with less spirit than in common.

"What ugly tunes those are!" observed Miss Eleanor, as the new governess concluded. "I liked Miss Wilson's best."

"You will be astonished at the ears my children have," observed Mrs. Constable to Clara. People who called at the house, and found the remarks they made in an undertone were heard and repeated often, thought the same thing. "But — you will excuse me — I think your playing wants a little brilliancy — and touch. Touch is what I wish you particularly to attend to with the children."

"I think, ma'am, you would find a slight improvement if I had another piano," answered Clara modestly.

"Very likely," replied the lady. "This is one of Broadwood's too."

Mrs. Constable evidently thought pianos were the same as violins, and improved with age.

"You will also be good enough not to omit practising Blanche's voice. You sing, I believe; at least, I think that was understood in the engagement?"

Clara bowed her head in acquiescence.

"Will you let me hear you?" asked Mrs. Constable.

"I am sorry to say I have a very bad cold at present," said Clara; "if you will excuse me, I would rather not."

"Dear me! that is rather unfortunate," replied the other, possibly surprised that governesses should ever take cold. "Blanche, my love, let me hear you sing."

But Blanche did not choose to sing just at that minute; whereupon Master Neville, who never required much pressing, directly struck up a popular infantine melody, which he had picked up from the children who played outside the square-railings on fine evenings. The others joined in chorus, and the Babel was only put down by the most strenuous exertions and assaults that Bingham dared to make before her mistress.

"You will be able to form some idea this morning of what they require to be taught," said Mrs. Constable; "but with respect to the piano, pay great attention to the touch. We have a better instrument in the drawing-room, on which you shall play this evening. We have a few friends coming to arrange about a fancy-ball I am about to give."

And with these final observations the lady sailed out of the room, taking Bingham with her, to consult upon domestic affairs, and leaving Clara alone with her interesting charges, to manage and instruct as she best might.

CHAP. VII.

MR. JOE JOLLIT WINS A SMILE FROM MR. SNARRY, WHO STILL STRUGGLES WITH HIS FEELINGS.

It was a fine sparkling afternoon—the morrow of the pic-nic—and Brunswick Wharf, Blackwall, was all life and gaiety. Bands of music, of untiring vigour, played lustily from elevated positions; and guests with light hearts and heavy appetites arrived each minute by land or water to demolish whitebait, with the reckless addition of cold punch and ducks, or the more sneaking subterfuge of premature tea. Visitors rested themselves upon the seats, and fancied they were at the sea-side; or perilously ventured to the extreme verge of the wharf for the sake of a purer blow. Knowing fellows with cigars, check trowsers, and hats worn at angles, called schooners “brigs,” and pointed out vessels, unknown to everybody else, as craft with whose captains they were intimately acquainted; whilst many others lingered on the pier in conversation until the time came for the steamer to depart for Gravesend.

Amongst these last, in grave costume, as became the Bank, were Mr. Snarry and the vivacious Jollit. The expected train arrived: the bell rang, and then, as Joe remarked to his friend, they were once more upon the waters, yet once more! The traces of yesterday’s revelry had entirely vanished; appetite had returned, and they descended into the cabin to dinner, being warned thereunto by various assistants, who appeared suddenly, like Eastern genii, with cooked meats under cover, no one might tell wherefrom, and hurried about the deck, wafting savoury odours of roast and boiled, to entice and determine vacillating passengers.

Everybody on board knew Mr. Joe Jollit; and everybody appeared anxious to make room for him near them when he entered the cabin. But he took the top of the table, with Mr. Snarry on his right hand; and then he proceeded to “come out” as was his wont, directing his

attacks chiefly against a fat curly-headed boy in attendance, whom he loved to insult by sarcastic allusions and speeches, or confuse by imaginary orders for rare viands and beverages. And in the interims of pleasantry he delighted the company by giving his far-famed imitation of the four-in-hand cornet, in an accompaniment to the band upon deck. This was in some measure useful in making out the tune ; for the trombone was the only instrument heard, in consequence of its end being projected through the top window ; and a trombone by itself is not an agreeable solo.

" Now, Periwinkle ! " cried Mr. Jollit to the boy, for so had he christened him ; " look alive. A pint of pale ale, and ask the engineer for a nice fresh cinder to put in it."

" He seems to know his name," observed Mr. Snarry as the boy grinned and dived out of sight into one of those mystic closets with which steamers abound.

" I should think so," returned Joe. " I called him Periwinkle, because when I first patronized the boat, he was so dunny that I was always obliged to wind him up out of the cabin stairs with my stick, before he would come, when I wanted anything. He's better now.—What's that, sir?"

" Pale ale, sir," replied the boy, placing the bottle on the table.

" Very good. Thirsty people find that a fine ' bass relief,' " observed Mr. Jollit, in the pride of a pun.

" Whereabouts are we, steward?" inquired one of the guests of the principal attendant, who was cutting veneers from a fillet of veal, as if he were working for his life.

The gentleman who asked the question was reading the " Steamboat Companion," and drinking brandy-and-water, to beguile himself into an idea that he was making a voyage, at one of the side-tables.

" If you go upon deck, sir," said Mr. Jollit, " you will see, written on a board, ' You are requested not to speak to the man at the *weal*.' "

The gentleman looked somewhat angry at the uncalled-for observation ; but Mr. Jollit followed up his speech in a sort of double-barrelled joke fashion, by asking —

"Why is that guide-book like a pair of handcuffs? Because it is meant for 'two wrists'—tourists!—don't you see? I think I had you there!"

The rest of the company laughed; and the strange guest, after deliberating for a minute or two what he should do, did the same.

"That friend of yours is an odd fellow," whispered a gentleman to Mr. Snarry.

"I was not aware of it, sir," replied Mr. Jollit, whose ears were ever keenly open to the remarks of those around him. "If I have given you the sign of the order, it has been by accident."

"I was alluding to Periwinkle, as you call him," observed the gentleman.

"Ah! he's a remarkable boy," replied Joe, catching hold of the young steward by his coat, and pulling him back as he was going. "His father was many years exposed in chains opposite Blackwall, and he never had a mother. Periwinkle!"

"Yes, sir," added the boy quickly. He evidently stood in awe of Joe.

"Transfer the earthenware, sir, and produce the herbage. Will you have any more of these verdant swanshot?" he added, offering the peas to Mr. Snarry.

His friend declined.

"These boats are fine things for people of delicate appetites," said Joe, as the vibration was more than usually perceptible.

"Why so?" inquired Mr. Snarry, in kindness and charity, seeing he waited to be asked.

"Because you have only to put the food in your mouth, and it is sure to be shaken down whether you will or no," replied Jollit.

"The victuals are always very good, I'm sure," urged Mr. Snarry.

"Snarry, my friend,"—replied Joe affectionately,—
"oblige me by not saying *victuals*: it is an ugly word. I know not why, but 'victuals' never seems to mean anything else beyond cold potatoes, mutton bones, and pie—

crust ; say food, viands, refreshment—anything but victuals. Periwinkle, do you call that clearing away ? I must lecture you. Come here, sir !”

He pointed reproachfully to a solitary pea, that was wandering vaguely about the table-cloth with the motion of the vessel ; and then again seized the lad with a firm grasp.

“ The pea,” observed Mr. Jollit, looking gravely at Periwinkle, and assuming the tone of a lecturer ; “ the pea, though small, offers a beautiful example of design in the vegetable creation. In infancy, when our hopes and fears are to each other known, it excites our wonder, enclosed within the tiny drum of childhood. In youth it invokes the spirit of independence, when projected against the windows of the obnoxious tradesman from the tube of moderate price. And in riper years it exercises the talents of the ingenious housekeeper, who knows that though too tough to boil with bacon, it will yet stew with veal. In the elaborate language of commonplace life, it is called a *pea* ; in the more simple nomenclature of botany it is designated a ‘ *papilionaceous legume*.’ Now, sir, if you do not repeat this to me, word for word, to-morrow afternoon, I shall put you into the boiler, until you are done to rags. Go along, sir !”

And Mr. Joe Jollit finished his oration by kicking Periwinkle all along the cabin, against various guests, and telling him to give the steward the change.

When dinner was over, Mr. Snarry and his friend went upon deck,—for they are not great wine-drinkers on board the Gravesend boats,—and here Mr. Jollit amused himself by pointing out imaginary localities on the banks of the river—Netley Abbey, Kenilworth Castle—and the like—to strange old ladies ; after which, he occupied twenty minutes in what he termed dodging the music—which was, shifting away from the man who came round for coppers : and lastly, he took his seat with his companion on the edge of the boat, behind the man at the wheel.

The pale ale had opened the springs of Mr. Snarry’s affections. It is lowering to the majesty of the mind to

think how much of romance occasionally depends upon bottled beer ; but yet this cannot be denied. And as he watched the landscape on either side, with the river winking and sparkling in the afternoon sun, he allowed his thoughts to return to Clara Scattergood, over whom a space of both time and distance was throwing a greater halo, to the detriment of Mrs. Hankins's sister. For so it ever is. We look back with lingering fondness, admiration, and even regret, to the past, which possibly was not one whit more agreeable than the present, because distance takes off the rough edges, and allows only a softened and favourable view of it. In like manner, the traveller crossing to the Continent throws many a glance of fondness and pleasure towards the white cliffs of the sea-port town that he has left behind, pondering upon their general view only, and never calling to mind the fleas, the landladies, and the tavern bills that therein excited so much of discontent and sorrow.

Mr. Jollit divined his friend's thoughts ; and looking at him with an expression of great meaning, as if he had something to communicate of importance, said,

"What do you think?"

Mr. Snarry could not tell.

"Who do you imagine that is from?" inquired Mr. Jollit, taking a parcel from the pocket of his coat. And without waiting for a reply, he went on. "That direction was written by Miss Scattergood."

It was an ordinary parcel of brown paper, tied with packthread and sealed ; but from that minute it became in Mr. Snarry's eyes a casket of morocco and gold.

"And how on earth did *you* come by it?" he asked, all astonishment.

"Bodle came just before we left to-day, and asked me to take it to the address in Gravesend. He heard Mrs. Scattergood saying she wished it delivered by a private hand, as there was an answer expected of some consequence ; and, just like him, offered to do it, without having the least notion of when he could."

"I think he might have asked me," said Snarry,

slightly offended, "considering I lived in the house, and knew the family."

"Why, so he would have done," answered Joe, "only you had just gone. However, you shall come with me if you like."

"Where is it?"

"'Gregory Scattergood, Esq., Chamouny Cottage, Windmill Hill,'" said Joe, reading the address.

"It's a brother of our one," said Snarry. "The little boy used to talk sometimes about his uncle Gregory, who'd got lots of money, but never gave anything. He said he was mad."

"Well, I shouldn't wonder," replied Jollit: "Bodle said something about not being surprised by eccentricities: only those musical people are always in the clouds, and you never can tell precisely what they mean."

The remainder of the journey passed without any particular excitement, except a slight personal encounter between Periwinkle and Mr. Jollit, in consequence of the former having said to him, "Any orders, gents?" in a mechanical manner, before he knew whom he was addressing.

"I think he will remember that," said Joe, once more kicking him several yards off, and throwing after him the large pincushion tied round with rope that was let down over the side of the boat when it came near a pier, which completed his downfall, to the discomfort of two gentlemen who were playing chess on the top of a bandbox.

"That is an insult," continued the funny gentleman. "Ever since I came by this boat, Periwinkle has brought round a broken old basket containing three tough sun-dried cigars, a fossil captain's biscuit, and an empty ginger-beer bottle, which he calls refreshments. He won't do it again, I know."

By this time the boat came alongside the Terrace Pier; and after Mr. Jollit had returned various salutations not intended for him, from people he did not know, who were waiting for their friends, and challenged the steward to a rifle-match at Rosherville for the price of the passage, he went on shore with the rest of the passengers.

CHAP. VIII.

A SINGULAR MEMBER OF THE SCATTERGOOD FAMILY IS INTRODUCED TO THE READER.

ANXIOUS to become acquainted with any relative of the object of his thoughts, Mr. Snarry allowed no rest to his companion until they had started forth to deliver the parcel; though Mrs. Hankins's sister was looking out for them in a new muslin dress of so delicate a texture, that she became a walking fly-trap, to the admiration of all beholders. But Mr. Snarry gave a hurried, though courteous greeting; and hoping to have the pleasure of seeing her by and by, dragged Jollit on towards the heights above the town.

They went up Parrock Street, which, as a newspaper would have said, presented a gay and animated appearance. For there were long lines of hack-carriages, of every form and description; with the drivers upon the boxes, like so many beasts of prey waiting to pounce upon in-offensive travellers, and bear them off they knew not whither, until they came to pay. And at the lodging-houses, every first-floor window was open, and had an occupant of the softer sex, and sometimes two: wives looking out anxiously to see if their husbands had arrived, or, perhaps, if they had not: young ladies expecting their devoted cavaliers, upon whose advent their presence at Rosherville that evening depended: and snug coteries, in the plenitude of unlimited shrimps and water-cresses, gazing down upon the passengers, and making such remarks as their temperament dictated — jocular, matter-of-fact, or satirical. But still, in spite of all the houses being lodgings, where the thousands went who hourly landed, remained in the same mystic obscurity, and ever will. The steamboats might almost be considered as enormous fireworks, which discharged crowds of human sparks in rapid succession, who coruscated on the pier for an instant, and then vanishing away altogether, were seen no more.

Mr. Jollit and Mr. Snarry passed on : and at length, after much investigation amongst a region of cottages in the various styles of Elizabethan, Swiss, Gothic, and Cockney Tudor, discovered the house they were seeking, after passing it three times. But this oversight may be excused, when it is stated that the name was inverted, as well as the brass-plate on the door, which read thus :

HING THE BELL.
MR. GREGORY SCATTERGOOD.

"Well," said Joe, "I don't know what you think, but this looks very like as if he *was* mad. Never mind — here goes."

So speaking, he pulled the bell, and the next minute a page answered the door. Mr. Jollit explained his mission, and they were shown into the hall, where they were left whilst the servant went to announce them, to their utter astonishment turning over and walking upon his hands, like mountebanks at fairs, with his heels in the air.

Mr. Jollit, forgetting what was due to politeness in his perception of the ludicrous, immediately went off into a roar of laughter : whilst Mr. Snarry, who began to feel very nervous and uncomfortable, sidled towards the door. But the page almost immediately returned, in the same strange fashion, and begged them to enter.

However singular everything had yet appeared, they were astonished a little more at entering the parlour. It was a remarkable room, and the first sight of it always brought the visitor to one of two decisive conclusions, — either that he himself was wonderfully drunk, or the owner intensely mad. Between these two ideas there was no medium : which may readily be conceived when the room, which the gentlemen entered, is described.

The floor was simply whitewashed, and along the ceiling was stretched a handsome Brussels carpet. The paper was a rich flock, consisting of sprigs all growing downwards ; and several engravings were hung from the walls, but every one was upside down : as also was a birdcage in the window, although the inmate did not accommodate himself

to its position. Two gilt cornices were placed on the ground, below the French windows, with muslin curtains pulled up from them, and thrown over the pins at the side ; and the venetian blinds drew up from the floor. The chairs and tables were in their ordinary position, it possibly having been found impracticable to make them assume any other, without screwing their legs to the ceiling ; but there was a bust of Sir Isaac Newton on a bracket which was topsy-turvy, kept so by some artful mechanical contrivance.

A cheerful-looking old gentleman, with grey hair, was sitting in a large easy-chair at the end of the room, whom Mr. Jollit half expected to see with Wellington boots on his hands, and his legs thrust into the arms of a coat. But he was mistaken : there was nothing out of the common way in his appearance : on the contrary, he was dressed with minute care.

" Mr. Gregory Scattergood, I believe," said Mr. Jollit politely, still wondering what it all meant.

" Yes, sir," said the old gentleman, " I am Mr. Gregory Scattergood—or rather," he added with a sigh, " I was ; for I have learned to disbelieve my own senses."

" I have brought this parcel from your brother, sir ; and I have to request an answer."

" Ah ! " said the old gentleman, shaking his head : " I wonder what he wants now, and so and so. I am sorry to keep you in this painful position, but what can I do ? "

Mr. Snarry looked at Mr. Jollit, who returned the glance ; and then they both assumed an expression of perfect incompetency to reply to his question, or define its meaning.

" I must get you to read it," said the old gentleman. " I suppose there are no secrets, and I have broken my spectacles, and so and so. They flew off from me centrifugally, as everything else goes."

Mr. Snarry eagerly took the letter ; whilst Joe Jollit appeared labouring under the most painfully apoplectic attempt to restrain a laugh that it is possible to conceive.

" Why, that's a month ago," said Mr. Gregory Scatter-

good, as Snarry read the date. "Ah! I suppose my brother had to forward it, and so and so. Go on, sir; if you can read, so strangely placed."

The visitors were again at a loss to divine his meaning; but Mr. Snarry read as follows, with a palpitating heart, for he saw the lines were traced by *her* hand:—

"MY DEAR UNCLE,— You will doubtless be surprised to receive a letter from us, considering how long we have been silent. But if you are angry, you must blame me alone: for it is all my doing, and I had to use great persuasion to get papa's and mamma's consent.

"You need not be told how much our circumstances are altered since we last saw you. We left Boulogne six months ago, and since then have been lodging in London, in the hope that papa may ultimately find a situation in a government office, through some of his electioneering friends, to whom he was agent. But hitherto his efforts have met with but little success.

"It is a long time since we have heard from Vincent; but we hope he is doing well. Freddy is at Merchant Tailors'; and I am going out as a governess, in a family to which I have been recommended, at the end of the month.

"I need not tell you that these changes have put us to some expense, which, although comparatively trifling, we can very ill afford; and I have ventured to solicit your assistance in a loan of twenty pounds. Papa could get the money in town upon the same security that we shall offer you, (for it is only with the understanding of its being repaid as speedily as possible that I am permitted to write); but he would, I am sure, prefer any other method. He has already suffered so severely by the bill-discounters, and people of that class.

"I wished papa to have come with me to your house; but we have been so long apart that he said he did not know how you would receive him. And, pray forgive me, uncle, if I have done wrong in thus acting, for, as I said before, I must take it entirely upon myself. Be assured, too,

that the pain attendant upon asking is in itself sufficient punishment for so doing. With our kind remembrances believe me to be your affectionate niece,

“CLARA SCATTERGOOD.”

“Umph!” said the old gentleman pettishly, as Mr. Snarry, with a tremulous voice, finished the letter, “all their own faults—every bit. Do you know them, sir, and so and so, and so and so?”

“Very well, indeed,” replied Snarry, getting used to his odd host’s expletives. “I lived in the same house, sir.”

“Ah! well; eh? and so and so,” continued Mr. Scattergood, twitching his nose about nervously, as if he smelt imaginary salts. “There—wait a bit, sir,—wait a bit. Ring the bell: and when that mad servant of mine comes, tell him you want some wine.”

As he spoke, the eccentric gentleman left the room, and Mr. Snarry joined Mr. Jollit in an irrepressible fit of laughter, which was only stopped by the appearance of the servant, who walked in upon his hands like a clown, and had evidently opened the door with his heels. As soon as he saw that his master was not there, he resumed his natural position, and establishing himself immediately upon those terms of easy familiarity only to be acquired by intercourse with society, exclaimed, pointing out of the room with a jocose grin,

“Isn’t he mad too—that’s all.”

“I hardly know myself whether I’ve been on my head or my heels,” said Mr. Snarry, getting more bewildered every minute.

“Well, you’re on your heels now, if that’s any consolation,” answered Jollit positively.

“You wouldn’t know at all if you lived here long,” said the boy.

“But what does all this lunacy mean?” asked Jollit, looking about him, and then going off again into convulsions.

“He says all gravity’s upset,” replied the boy, with another grin.

“I don’t wonder at it, at all,” said Joe: “mine is. And who are you?”

“I’m the page. He hired me because he saw me walking on my hands for halfpence on Windmill Hill. He says that’s the proper way now the earth’s changed. The housemaid wouldn’t do it, and so I came.”

“The little boy told me once that his uncle was very strange in some notions he entertained about philosophy,” said Snarry; “he made out it was from over-study.”

“And so you used to tumble for money?” asked Joe, who had a great affection for mountebanks. “Let us see you do something.”

“I can pick up a sixpence with my eyes,” said the boy.

“Well, fire away, then,” returned Mr. Jollit.

“Ah! but I hav’nt got the sixpence.”

Mr. Jollit, divining the motive, directly threw down the coin, and the boy went through a series of posturings, which the funny gentleman immediately attempted to imitate as near as possible, and with some success. Indeed, Mr. Jollit had commenced a very elaborate feat upon one of the chairs, when Mr. Gregory Scattergood returned.

He was not surprised at finding Mr. Jollit thus engaged: on the contrary, it appeared to please him; for when the facetious visitor dropped into a natural position, the old gentleman begged him not to discompose himself. His gymnastic feat had evidently been a point in his favour.

“There!” he said, placing a parcel in Jollit’s hand, “there’s the twenty pounds. Tell them I don’t want any security, and then I shall buy them up for good, and so and so. My brother ought to have foreseen all this before. Ugh! bah! he’s mad, sir,—quite mad.”

“I will take care that an acknowledgment is sent to you, sir,” said Mr. Snarry, who did not choose to be cut out of this, to him, interesting mission, because he could not stand on his head.

“Ah, very well—very well—as you please,” replied Mr. Scattergood. “Ask my brother if he recollects trying

to get me into a madhouse: the act of a confirmed lunatic, who always thinks everybody else cracked but himself, and so and so. But they found me too particular in money-accounts for them; and my system is the right one."

"Beyond all doubt, sir," answered Jollit.

"To be sure, and it will all come out soon. The centre of gravity is gone, sir,—gone. Apples will no longer fall to the ground; in three years they will go up like balloons, when they tumble off the boughs. I am on my head, sir — you are on your head — we're all on our heads, and so and so."

The old gentleman was evidently getting excited, which state Mr. Snarry did not improve, by rashly observing that no one would think it by looking at them.

"No, sir," said Mr. Gregory Scattergood vehemently, "that is the misfortune; no one would, but the ingenious optician who manufactures telescopes to see about eight miles, and sent me his treatise upon the eye, although I have not the pleasure of his acquaintance, which was a mark of respect that would have been improved had he paid the postage, and so and so. Look, sir, and convince yourself."

He took a diagram of the eye from the mantelpiece, exclaiming:—

"There, sir; what do you think of that?"

"It's very curious," said Mr. Snarry, not knowing at all what to think, and getting more nervous.

"Not a bit curious, sir; as simple as you are. Look at that arrow marked A, B: its image falls upon the retina topsy-turvy, and you see everything in the same manner. How could you be walking along the ceiling as you are, if it were not so?"

"I perfectly agree with you, sir," said Joe Jollit, "and so, I am sure, does my friend. We will take every care of your polite transmission, and deliver it to-morrow."

And bowing politely to the old gentleman, who was getting as ruffled as an insulted turkey-cock, he left the house with Mr. Snarry,—the latter gentleman evidently alarmed.

"Well," said Joe, as they got out once more into the highway, "I rather think we shall make Mrs. Hankins's sister laugh when we tell her about what we have seen. It would not be believed in a book."

CHAP. IX.

CLARA IS MADE TO FEEL HER POSITION.

For two or three hours did Clara endeavour to find out what the little Constables knew, or rather what they did not, without arriving at any nearer conclusion than she had formed in the first two or three minutes. They were evidently clever children, but entirely beyond all control: nor, indeed, could they be expected to look up to any governess with respect or obedience, whilst Mrs. Constable herself set them so bad an example in treating her almost as a domestic.

About noon a message was sent up to say that the young ladies and Master Neville were to go for a walk in the square, under Clara's charge. They were to call in the drawing-room as they went down, when Mrs. Constable gave her very minute instructions as to what children they were to associate with, and to avoid.

"Be particular, Miss Scattergood, not to form any acquaintance with those girls in the white bonnets," said Mrs. Constable, pointing to a little party in the enclosure. "They are the Hendersons; very vulgar children, and exceedingly forward."

The Hendersons were remarkably pretty, and always attracted more notice than the Constables.

"Oh! there are the Armstrongs now going in," said Mrs. Constable. "A family of rare attainments,—quite different, I am certain, to any you have ever known,—most charming people!"

And here Mrs. Constable ran her eyes up and down Clara's figure with a look of inquiry as to whether her

toilet was sufficiently imposing for her to appear with credit before the Armstrongs as the governess in the family. The inspection was satisfactory. Clara was plainly dressed, but everything, albeit made by herself, fitted so exquisitely, that there was no room for fault.

"Now, Blanche — Eleanor," continued the lady; "mind you are very polite to Bessy Armstrong. And, Miss Scattergood, do not let Neville talk to the low children outside the railings; he picks up all sorts of vulgar habits from them. I shall have my eye upon you."

The children left Clara as soon as they got into the square, and went to their friends, leaving her seated on a bench under a tree, and taking no more notice of her. Two or three of the inhabitants of the surrounding houses were walking about, and as they passed they stared at her, seeing she was a stranger, and then made remarks, just audible, concerning her, and sometimes looked back after walking on a little way. At last a young lady, who was with the Armstrongs — a pale, delicate girl, about one-and-twenty — came and offered her a morning-paper to read which she was carrying in her hand. She did this without any introduction, for she perceived that Clara was like herself — a governess; and there was immediately a tacit intimacy established between them, closer than any conventional etiquette would have brought about. For they were both in the same isolated position; no wonder that the one was as glad to accept the proffered acquaintanceship as the other was to offer it.

"You have not been long at Mrs. Constable's?" said her new friend.

"I only came last night," replied Clara. "Do you know anything of them?"

"They are gay people," answered Miss Deacon — for so was the other young lady called; "but I think Mrs. Constable yields too much to other people's opinions. No one appears to stay long with her."

"Did you know the last governess?" asked Clara.

"Miss Wilson: oh! yes. Poor girl! she had disease of the spine. She was not there many months; and Mrs.

Constable actually told her at last that if her figure did not improve she must get rid of her."

An expression of pity and reproach combined fell from Clara's lips.

"I was told that she said nothing added so much to the respectability of a house as good-looking servants and governesses. And so Miss Wilson went away, — I heard, to a school at Brighton, where she scarcely received any salary, on account of the sea-bathing."

"Did she ever speak about these children?" inquired Clara.

"I believe she thought them very perverse and untractable, although clever. I think sometimes people gain a certain sort of credit for sneering at schools, and talking of their own governesses, which they are but little entitled to."

"In what respect?"

"Because it is a mere point of saving. It is much cheaper to pay us a small salary to teach three or four children, than to put them separately to an academy. I am afraid, though, I must leave my present situation. There is too much to do; and they say my lungs are not very strong. I do not think so myself, though, — do you? See, — I can draw a very long breath."

The young girl made a long inspiration as she looked earnestly at Clara. But towards the end of it she pressed her hand against her left side, and her face assumed an expression of pain.

Clara turned the conversation, and before long they found they had both been to school at Boulogne about the same time, although at different establishments; and this started such a fresh series of questions and reminiscences about the brown dresses which all the young ladies wore at Miss Burton's, and the puce uniforms at Miss Cruickshanks: if they went to the balls at the establishment; and so many others of a similar kind, that Clara was quite sorry when her new friend left her, to look after her charges.

"No one appears to stay long with her," thought Clara,

repeating the words of the other. "And if I go away soon, which perhaps I may, how shall I find another situation?"

She took up the newspaper that was lying at her side, and her eye fell upon the second page. There were two entire columns — nearly seventy advertisements of young women wanting to be engaged as governesses, — nearly seventy records of broken domestic circles, fallen fortunes, and the struggles of refined and educated minds against circumstances! Many offered to teach, too, several branches of education, of which she had not even studied the elements: others would be content with the heartless, unsympathising home the family or school afforded as an equivalent for their services; and all put forward salaries so modest that they would not have been accepted by a footman or a cook. The sheet did not put forth the wants of a year, a month — nay, a week; it was the chronicle of a single day.

She felt her heart sink at the cheerless prospect, and turned over to the miscellaneous news. Amongst the paragraphs was one that caught her eye. It was headed "Daring burglary and incendiarism," and detailed a robbery and fire that had taken place at some country-house in Essex, near the town where her family had once resided, and with whose inmates they had formerly been on terms of some intimacy. It ended by stating that the leader of the gang had been taken; but that at present, for certain reasons, his name had been suppressed. She had scarcely time to finish the piece of intelligence, which somewhat interested her, before Miss Deacon came for the paper, as they were going to leave the square. Clara expressed no little pleasure at having met some one in a similar situation to herself, who might be a companion; and then almost immediately afterwards, accompanied by the children, whom she had some difficulty in getting together, went home to the nursery-dinner.

The afternoon passed away much in the same manner as the morning, with the exception that the children were more rebellious and troublesome, as soon as they found

their mamma had started forth to pay visits. At bed-time, also, there was a terrible uproar, in consequence of Master Neville having discovered that Blanche was to sit up in the drawing-room, as some friends were expected. But, what with threats and bribes, the latter preponderating, he was at length pacified. And then a message was brought up to the nursery by the servant in plain clothes, requesting "that Miss Scattergood would be so good as to come down, and bring her music with her."

Having accomplished his mission, and without waiting for any reply, the man went away. Clara collected a few sets of waltzes and quadrilles, and putting aside her tea, which she was just about to commence, in all the form of the black tea-pot and German-silver spoon, went down stairs to the drawing-room, where seven or eight of Mrs. Constable's friends had assembled.

She entered the room unannounced, and without being introduced to anybody. Two or three of the ladies turned their heads round and stared at her, until Mrs. Constable remarked to them, half-audibly, "It is only my new governess, Miss Scattergood," when they immediately turned back again, and went on talking. Clara, however, perceived at a glance that the young man was there who had followed her with the handkerchief in Russell Place. He was sitting at a small side-table, talking and laughing with a young lady, as he copied a fancy costume from a fashion-book lying open before him.

The governess placed her music on the piano, and then silently took her seat at its side, like the musician at an evening party waiting for the signal to commence playing. No one took the least notice of her except the gentleman, who immediately rose from his place and offered her a chair. The young lady he had been laughing with evidently thought this a great act of condescension on his part; and Mrs. Constable looked very angrily at Clara, probably for having been so bold as to attract the gentleman's notice.

In a short time the servant in plain clothes entered, bearing coffee, followed by the footman with another waiter, and forming a procession of two. They went round to

everybody except Clara, of whom they did not take the least notice, and then left the room. The young man, with whom they all appeared very intimate, and who was called Herbert, noticed the omission, and said politely to Clara,

"I do not think you have had any coffee."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Constable, "dear me, Miss Scattergood, I am afraid they overlooked you. Shall I ring for them to bring you up a cup?"

This was said in a tone which implied, "You will surely never have the assurance to ask for it."

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Clara, as her eyes filled with tears at the unkind slight; "I have taken tea."

Mrs. Constable need not have distressed herself. It was not likely that Clara would have had coffee up for herself alone.

"Then, perhaps, you will be good enough to play something," said the lady, directly afterwards going on with some plan for a costume quadrille at her approaching party.

Clara rose to the piano; but Mr. Herbert went also, and assisted her to open it; and when she began to play, he stood at her side, and turned over the leaves of the music, every now and then uttering a few words of encouragement in a low tone of voice. This was to the great horror of Mrs. Constable, who kept saying, "Come, Herbert, we are waiting for your decision here,"—as well as of the young lady, who looked all sorts of things. But nevertheless he still kept there.

This had gone on some little time, when the butler opened the door, and informed the guests generally that there was a person in the hall inquiring for Miss Scattergood. Clara was surprised, and at the same time annoyed from the man's tone; but, thinking that it might be a message from home, she begged Mrs. Constable to excuse her for a minute, and left the room.

"Dear me, how strange!" said the lady, when she had gone. "I wonder who it can be at this time of night. It is very odd. That is the worst of governesses: you

never know what odd sets of connexions they have in the background. I shall ring and inquire."

But as she had been telling her friends, before Clara came, that she was very well connected, upon second thoughts the lady decided upon not doing so, and turned the conversation.

Some minutes elapsed before Clara came back. At last she returned ; and, as she entered the room, her altered appearance struck everybody. She was deadly pale, her lips were quivering, and tears were chasing one another over her almost marble face ; whilst she faltered across the room to the piano, and leant upon it for support.

"I fear you are ill," said Mr. Herbert, first speaking, as he rose to lead her to a chair.

But ere he could approach her, she gave a piercing hysterical shriek, yet so full of agony, that it went to the hearts of all present, and then fell senseless upon the floor.

CHAP. X.

VINCENT MEETS WITH SOME OLD FRIENDS, UNDER UNPLEASANT CIRCUMSTANCES.

A TERRIBLE sight indeed is a fire in the country. Equally destructive as it may be in town, yet it loses much of its grandeur from being pent up by the adjoining buildings,—the chafings of a caged beast of prey, instead of the wild devastation of the desert monster roaming at will. And the very means of its prevention, which come in a commonplace and business-like manner, as if its outburst had been anticipated, rob it of much of its awful sublimity. The people, too, assemble to it as they would to a spectacle ; they joke and jibe in its very glare, at every fresh blaze that darts up from the glowing furnace or falling timber ; and, when over, return and think no more about it, unless a coroner's inquest renews the interest. The next day the rapidly-erected boarding that surrounds the ruins is

covered with gay-coloured placards of amusements, which soon draw away the attention of the gazers from the windowless and blackened shell they inclose. But wildly, fearfully devastating is it in the country, and frightful to behold is its uncurbed power.

The fire kindled by Bolt greedily caught the dry balusters of the staircase, and, spreading along the gallery, the entire wing of Brabants was soon one sheet of crackling flame, leaping and curling high in air, whilst it twined round the roofs and pinnacles of the building, as if caressing them, previously to shooting up in a blazing column from its destructive embraces. Far along the sky, and widely over the surrounding land, did its red illumination extend: chequered by the huge volumes of black and curling smoke, and the legions of dancing sparks, which flew off upon the heated wind, ranging the heavens in wild and glowing freedom.

The grounds and homesteads were soon one scene of terror and confusion, as the people kept pouring in from every direction; whilst crowds more could be seen by the light of the conflagration hurrying across the fields, scrambling through the hedges, and breaking down whatever barriers opposed their progress; for destruction seemed authorised by the desolating element. Some were handing pails from one to the other, as they made a line to the pond, which threatened in a very short time to be dry. Others, again, had mounted to the tops of the ricks in the adjoining yard,—which were directly to windward, and upon which a shower of fiery rain was pouring in fearful grandeur,—spreading wet tarpaulins over them, and otherwise endeavouring to avert the impending danger; whilst many were striving, by all that force of voice and muscle could accomplish, to drag or drive the scared and snorting horses from the stables, whose thatched roofs threatened each instant to break out into flames. The other animals and poultry of the farm were running hither and thither at their frightened will; whilst the pigeons could be plainly seen in the bright gleam above the house, throwing back the light from their wings as they wheeled round

and round in terror, until they fell suffocated into the ardent mass beneath.

Then the noise increased as one of the county engines arrived, swarming with human beings, who clung as bees to every available portion of its machinery ; and drawn by four horses, who tore like lightning along the grounds, cutting deep furrows in the velvet turf of the lawn, and crushing down everything that crossed its track. And, in contrast to this tumult and devastation, the moon was calmly sailing through the sky, her light shimmering in soft quietude upon all the objects in the shadow of the conflagration.

At the end of the garden-terrace was a group of fine trees, in the lee of the fire, and some of the farm-people and servants were hastily removing to this spot such furniture and ornaments as they could readily save from the burning. Immediately behind this, a small wicket in the palings led to a cottage inhabited by one of the keepers : and here, as the only shelter available, Mr. Grantham had caused his daughter to be taken, accompanied by little Fred. And here also had Vincent been brought by the village tipstaves, into whose charge he had been given, and who, looking at his powerful figure, had prevailed upon one or two of their fellows to accompany them.

It was a curious picture formed by the inmates of this cottage. The interior was barely illumined by the light of the fire, which broke through the casement, and danced and flickered upon the opposite wall in fantastic and changing figures. Amy Grantham, apparently insensible to everything around, betraying no signs of life except the quivering of her form, reclined in a huge clumsy chair of carved oak, near the fireplace, with her face buried in her hands. The little boy had crept to his brother, grasping his hand, and looking up to him with a pale and terrified countenance, without speaking ; whilst Vincent himself, with every muscle of his face rigid and contracted, his eye fixed upon Amy, and his breath coming in strong audible expirations through his distended nostrils, was stationed near the door, half surrounded by his rustic guar-

dians, who had taken down some guns from the racks in the ceiling, and now assumed the appearance of an armed force.

Not a word passed between them. The constant hurrying in and out of the farm-people, with different things saved from the conflagration, precluded any conversation, no less than the careful manner in which his sentinels surrounded Vincent. The embarrassment was becoming painful to the last degree, when Mr. Grantham reappeared, hastily followed by two or three more labourers, one of whom was Chandler, the man first introduced to the reader as talking to Bolt on the winter's evening, in the precincts of Brabants. An important official also, with a constable's staff, from which frequent service had removed the ordinary gay emblazonment, was of the party, and he immediately advanced to Vincent and seized him by the collar, in a state of very courageous trepidation.

"You can take the prisoner to the cage, Ferret," observed Mr. Grantham, in a hurried voice, hoarse from excitement and emotion.

As he spoke, Amy started from the fixed attitude she had assumed, and, looking in her father's face as she rose, appeared about to address him. He repressed her intention, however, by an impatient gesture, and seizing her by the arm, obliged her to resume her seat.

"Will you hear what I have to say?" asked Vincent, speaking for the first time.

"At present," replied Mr. Grantham, "certainly not. You will have every opportunity of so doing hereafter; and the presence of some of my brother magistrates will be necessary before I proceed with this business."

"And my family!" exclaimed Vincent, speaking through his clenched teeth.

"You should have given them a thought before," replied the other. "You can remove him, Ferret, and see that he is kept by himself. You shall have further orders to-morrow. Come here, child."

The last words were addressed to Freddy, who, as the

men were leading Vincent away, followed them, still laying hold of his brother.

"Come here," repeated Mr. Grantham, severely, pulling the child back. "You cannot go with them."

"I will go," cried Freddy, struggling. "I don't like you, and I won't stay here. Vincent!"

He called after his brother in piteous accents; but the party had already left the cottage, and the door was closed. He twisted himself away from Mr. Grantham's hold, and ran to the window, still crying aloud Vincent's name, but to no purpose. And then, when he saw his sorrow did not avail, he rushed to Amy, and throwing his arms round her neck, hid his face amongst her long dark ringlets, sobbing as if his heart would break. Amy, in her turn, clung to the little boy; in her desolation, he was the only thing left in the world for her to love.

Mr. Grantham was not unmoved at the scene; but he still preserved his stern demeanour, and then, accompanied by the people who remained after Vincent had departed, left the cottage.

The gleam which illumined the interior grew fainter and fainter as the exertions of the labourers were gradually overcoming the progress of the conflagration. No one, however, came near them, and Freddy's sobs became weaker and at longer intervals apart, until Amy having raised him into her lap, he went fast asleep, watched over with the deepest solicitude by his lovely and weeping guardian.

The roundhouse, or cage, appropriated to the detention of malefactors in the little village adjoining Brabants, was a brick building situated at the edge of the green, adjoining a pond, and overshadowed by a huge lime-tree, some of whose branches stretched across the roof. It was traditioned to have once been an engine-house as well; and there was a rickety decayed piece of mechanism within that bore out the truth of the legend, about which various dusty black leather serpents clung and twined, or fell rotting to pieces on the ground.

A comical old fellow was that parish-engine, and a knowing one withal. When he was drawn out on certain days

to be exercised, and the boys played at see-saw on his handles, he wheezed, and chuckled, and choked with very mischief : spirting out the pond-water in all sorts of quaint directions, and never failing to contribute his quota to the hilarity of the meeting. But when taken to serious affairs, where he was expected to come out in force by the bystanders, like most wags, he obstinately refused to do any thing of the kind. It was no use pumping him then ; by a few sarcastic jets, as much as to say, " See what I could do if I chose ! " he threw a damp over the meeting, in spite of all the importance with which the clerk, who was also the postman, stopped up the nozzle of the hose with his thumb to coax him into playing. He knew better, did the engine. He was parochial, and as such partook of the uselessness and obstinacy of every other official that laid claim to the same attribute. But the day of retribution came. One of the magistrates married the sister of a London engineer, and he soon persuaded the farmers to protect their ricks by subscribing for an engine of their own. Two or three miserly inhabitants did not see the necessity for one, as there had never been any fires in the neighbourhood, and they thought the advent of the new machine would put incendiarism into the heads of the rustics, by showing that it was anticipated. But they were soon overruled, and then the new engine came down,—a long, flaunting, gaudy, splashy-looking affair, which glittered about the village for a day or two, throwing water over the church-steeple, and emptying the common pond in twenty minutes, until the old parochial retired to decay and oblivion,—as sad an emblem of a superseded wag as any of the dramatic or literary examples of the kingdom could present.

The lodge, or entrance-hall of the round house, had nothing terrific in its appearance. It was tenanted by the keeper and his daughter, who retailed ancient confectionary displayed in the window,—durable puffs, and bullseyes kept in tumblers, covered by the lids of defunct teapots ; and in summer-time a table was projected in front of the door in warm weather, on which were ranged bottles of

tepid ginger-beer, lukewarm plums, and dusty biscuits, for the refreshment of travellers. But within these was a door of imposing and iron-bound aspect, and beyond this again the keep, or stronghold, with one or two smaller cells opening into it.

In this prison, at an advanced hour of the night of the fire at Brabants, but before Vincent had been brought thither, there was an individual seated on what appeared to be an inverted butter-firkin, and smoking a pipe of curtailed dimensions, as he watched the flickering glimmer of a rush-light placed upon the ground in an empty bottle. It was the person who had been introduced to Vincent at the water-side public-house under the name of Tubs, the attendant at the cab-stand. He was grumbling to himself in audible tones, and occasionally directing a few words to another captive, whose face was just visible between the bars of a small grating in one of the inner doors.

"I know'd it would be so," he muttered. "How should the people of this out-of-the-way place see a London cab lurking about after dark without suspecting it?"

"Well, it can't be helped now, Bill," answered the other through the wicket.

"I knows it," replied Tubs philosophically, after a few consecutive whiffs. "What comforts me is, I've got my bucket. I would bring my furnitur' with me; because I know they ain't pertickler about accommodations in these villintropical institutions."

"I reckon there's not much chance of getting away either," continued the other.

"Nonesundever, Cricket," answered Tubs, addressing Bolt — for it was he — by his sobriquet, "I expect there's half-a-dozen gamekeepers in the outer lodge, and they've all got their licence to shoot. Should you like to try?"

"If I can get out of this, I'm game," returned Bolt.

"If you *are* game, they'll bring you down — safe," answered the other, with a chuckle.

"I have been a fool!" exclaimed Bolt, with an oath

"Hear!" observed Mr. Tubs, tapping out the ashes of

his pipe upon the ground, and then proceeding to fill it with his wonted gravity.

"I might have got clean off, if the sight of a cursed tankard in the dining-room had not kept me. There'll be a long score to settle between me and Mr. Vinson, when we meet."

"Ullow!" cried Tubs, as a noise in the lodge attracted his notice, "here's somebody else coming. Well — I'm agreeable. I wonders who it is."

And, drawing his tub to a corner of the room, he re-seated himself.

The bustle increased; then there was the noise of the rusty bolts being drawn back, and immediately afterwards two or three of the keepers from Brabants entered, headed by Ferret, and bringing in Vincent Scattergood with them.

"There, mister," said the constable, in the courage of security: "you'll be all right here, and have every attention paid you. Ha! ha! to think you belong to the poachers I've been after so long, and found you at last."

Vincent made no reply; but walking towards a low wooden bench, flung himself down upon it.

"Ha! ha!" echoed Mr. Tubs, from his corner, "very singular — uncommon — isn't it?"

"Oh, you're there, are you?" said Ferret, turning sharply round upon the captive waterman. "The orders from the gov'nor is, that Mr. Scattergood's to be by himself, so I must chum you with Bolt."

"You're very good," answered his prisoner, crossing his legs; "but I'd sooner stay where I am."

"No go," briefly replied Ferret, as he went to the door of Bolt's cell, and opened it. "Come along, my man — quick's the word."

"I must take my bucket," said Tubs, as he drew his seat after him.

"Take what you like," said Ferret, "but go in."

The waterman obeyed, — in fact it was no use doing otherwise, — and sulkily dragging his inseparable companion after him, went into the cell. The door was closed

upon him, Ferret muttering something about the lock being hampered, and then he departed with his attendants, having first recommended Vincent not to quarrel with his company, which, from the laughter with which it was received, appeared to be an ancient joke, and, as such, sure to go well.

CHAP. XI.

THE RELEASE AND THE FLIGHT.

VINCENT took no notice of his captors as they left the lock-up house, and for some time after their departure remained in the same attitude, buried in his own meditations. Everything was now quiet, nothing breaking the silence but the occasional sputter of the rushlight, or the smothered voices of Tubs and Bolt conversing in the inner cell.

Gloomy indeed, and utterly hopeless, was the prospect which his ideas called up before him. Every intention of future rectitude and intended reformation of his vagabond career had been crushed to the ground : his very exertions to avert the mischief of the evening had been turned against him, and heaven only knew how it would terminate. He had become the irreclaimable outcast of that society from whose level his thoughtless and unsteady career had dragged him down ; the fatality which appeared to attend upon everything he undertook had now arrived at its last degree of evil chance. His family, too, would be degraded through his criminality, albeit he was no criminal ; and Amy would be taught to shudder at his very name. He recalled all the events of his previous existence, passing them in review before him, and picturing them as they might have been, but for his own wilful heedlessness, until his brain turned round with thinking ; and he once more gave himself up to bitter, dark despair.

An hour had passed gloomily away in these meditations, when he was aroused by the creaking noise of the bolts on

the other side of the door. Immediately afterwards it opened, and a female, whom he had caught sight of in the lodge as he was brought in, entered, followed by another, enveloped in a common whittle. They whispered for an instant at the door; and then the first comer departed, leaving her companion, who advanced towards Vincent, as she took off the shawl, and threw it upon the ground, pronouncing his name in a low, tremulous voice.

He started at the sound. Had his racking thoughts called up so close a semblance of reality? — Was it a vision of his fevered brain? Scarcely daring to trust his senses, he exclaimed,

“Amy!”

It was indeed Miss Grantham who stood before him, pale and trembling, her hair floating on her shoulders, and in the same hurried toilet in which he had borne her from the fire.

“Vincent,” she ejaculated, as he drew her towards him, amazed, and still almost doubting his senses, “what will you think of me for this step? Do not despise me for having sought you here, forgetting everything that was due to my own honour.”

“My own dear girl!” cried Vincent, encircling her with his arms, and pressing her still closer to his bosom. “Ten thousand blessings on your noble spirit, that can still cling to me, when deserted by everything else in the world.” And then he added, after a moment’s pause, with a bitter and dreary expression, “Too late — it is now too late!”

“It is not too late, Vincent. You may escape, if you choose; for I have provided means.”

“You, Amy? What do you mean?”

“Vincent,” continued the girl, with hurried emotion, “I have fought long against the love I still have for you. I have prayed that it might be turned aside, — that I might hear you had forgotten me, or were married to another; for I saw that I was upon the edge of some dark precipice, as deep as it was fearful, and I had no one from whom I could seek advice or comfort — ”

"But, Amy, ——"

"Listen," she interrupted him: "it has been in vain. I have seen you once more, — the recollection of what once was has come back with double fervour, and I feel that our destinies are linked together beyond all human control."

"My own Amy!" replied Vincent passionately; then, with a sudden shudder, he half repelled her, as he exclaimed in an altered tone, "No — no — it cannot be. Look on me as I am — a suspected thief — a felon! I could not drag you with me into the abyss of misery which must henceforth be my portion. You must forget me."

"I know the circumstances that have made you what you are," continued Miss Grantham; "I also remember what you were. Vincent!" she continued with a sudden burst of energy, "do not turn away from me. Be assured I still love you — that my heart will never change."

And as she spoke she fell upon her knees, almost at his feet, still clinging to him.

"Why did we not meet before this last dark brand fixed its stamp upon me?" said Vincent, raising her up. "No, Amy, — I am now lost — for ever."

"No — you are saved, I tell you," replied his companion. "One of the men from the farm is waiting outside, and will assist you. It is Chandler: you must recollect him. He is the only one I could trust."

"And what will become of you, Amy?"

"Oh, fear not for me; I can leave this fearful place as quietly as I entered it. The people are all at Brabants, and have left no one but the keeper's daughter in the lodge. We were foster-sisters, and she would do anything for me. Is there anything you can throw up to the roof as a sign?"

Vincent looked round, and saw a broken mug in a corner of the room, apparently used for the prisoners' refreshment. The ceiling was old and unrepaired, the plaster had fallen off in large patches, and in some places the laths as well, showing the tiles above upon their raf-

ters. Through one of these openings he contrived to throw the piece of crockery against the roof; and the next moment the tiles were speedily removed, and a stout rope curled down into the lock-up room.

At this instant the girl who had conducted Amy to the prison entered suddenly, apparently in great fear.

"There are lights at the end of the lane, m^{rs}," she exclaimed. "I think father is coming back with the others. Pray go before he returns, or I shall be ruined."

"For heaven's sake, Amy, do not stay another instant. I will do all you wish, but depart this instant. Go, I implore you."

He caught her to his arms in one hurried embrace, and exclaimed, "Farewell!" with an intensity that comprised an hundred emotions. And then, as if unwilling to hear her speak again, he led her to the door, pale, and nearly fainting with emotion, and gave her to the care of the girl who had admitted her. Once more the bolts creaked as they were shot in their rusty sockets, and then once more Vincent was alone.

"Chandler?" he cried cautiously, as he looked up towards the ceiling.

"It's all right, Mr. Scattergood," replied the man, whose voice he directly recognised: "only you'd better make haste, for they are coming back again."

"They will be fortunate to catch me," replied Vincent, who now felt his natural daring returning, which with him always rose in proportion to the danger. He commenced tying a knot at the end of the rope, whereon to rest his foot.

"I ax pardon," continued Chandler through the ceiling, "but there's a pardner of mine in trouble as may as well come too. Perhaps you'd open the cell-door."

Left to Vincent's own choice, he would certainly rather not have complied with the request; but as he was at present situated, he had no choice but to comply. He therefore drew back the bolts, and discovered Tuhs and his fellow-prisoner, both in a sound sleep, on the ground.

To rouse them by a kick or two was the work of an

instant. Bolt's first movement was one of revenge upon Vincent; but his firm powerful figure kept the other in check, until he had explained his motive as rapidly as time allowed.

"Well, it's certain I meant to treat you quite different when we met," said Bolt; "but, as this makes number two of the times you've saved me, we'll write paid to the bill. I'm your man — fire away."

Vincent seized the rope with muscles of iron, and was soon at the opening in the roof, with a facility that he only could have acquired at sea. The other end had been tied to a branch of the lime-tree, before spoken of as overhanging the roundhouse, on which Chandler had established himself, shadowed by its full summer leaves.

Bolt followed with less speed, climbing with the clumsiness of a bear instead of the agility of a squirrel. But eventually he gained the top, and joined the others.

Mr. Tubs now only was left. He was a man of corpulent figure, resulting from a prolonged and copious imbibition of malt liquor without exercise; and any one might have as soon told him to fly over St. Paul's as to climb a rope. He therefore commenced tying his inseparable bucket to the extremity; which being arranged to his satisfaction, he implored the others to draw him up, as he got into it. It was a difficult task for their united efforts to move the dead weight from the ground; but they at last succeeded. Fortune, however, had refused to befriend Mr. Tubs in his present emergency; for, just as Vincent, Bolt, and Chandler had raised him three or four feet from the ground, the bottom of the bucket, unused to such a trial of its strength, gave way suddenly, and allowed its unfortunate occupant to slip down through the staves to the ground; whilst the remainder, relieved of his weight, being pulled over his head, flew up rapidly through the opening. And then at this minute, by the same ill chance, the keeper and his rural force returned.

"There's not a second to lose," cried Bolt, gliding down the bough of the tree. "Every man for himself."

"And each take a different way," added Chandler, as he

prepared with Vincent to follow his example. They were soon all three upon the ground.

Luckily for their movements, the moon was obscured by some passing clouds, and it was nearly pitch dark. Bolt exclaimed, hurriedly, to Vincent, "Recollect the schooner—get there if you can," and then was almost immediately lost in the gloom, together with Chandler; whilst Vincent crossed the little green contiguous to the roundhouse, with just light enough to guide him, and, turning from the road into a meadow, began to fly rapidly across the fields, in what he knew to be the direction of the river.

He dashed on for the first ten minutes, utterly reckless of the obstacles he encountered, now breaking through a fence or tearing down a hurdle-barrier, and the next minute clearing a ditch, or missing his footing, and falling back into it. But he still kept on, for he fancied he heard voices in pursuit; and once, on venturing to look back as he ran, he saw lights about the spot whereon the roundhouse stood, belonging to the keepers, who were spreading the alarm from a rusty croaking bell, that hung in a small open wooden turret over the lodge. And not until he had placed a good distance between the danger and himself did he venture to slacken his progress.

At length he reached the outskirts of Gray's Thurrock, and, passing through its silent streets down to the river, he was delighted to find his boat where he had left it, but now high and dry on the shore from the tide. To run it down the shingle was, however, the work of a minute; and then, taking the sculls, which he had had the precaution to padlock to the boat, he was once more launched upon the river, and lustily pulling towards London, but with a power perfectly mechanical. The events of the last few hours had so bewildered him, that he laboured, perfectly unconscious of fatigue, until actual bodily exhaustion forced him to relax his efforts.

It was now tolerably light, for the moon had come out, and he was enabled to see some black object following him up the river, and rapidly gaining on him. As it came nearer, however, he found, to his relief, that it was a small

tug steamer, probably returning from having towed some large vessel out of the Thames. He hailed it as it came alongside his boat, and, getting permission to attach his rope to it, was drawn in its wake as far as Limehouse Reach, where he was cast off, the men on board wishing him good night, or rather morning, for there was already a dull grey light in the eastern sky.

His only object now was to discover the schooner Bolt had pointed out to him on the previous evening. He scanned every vessel as he came up the pool with the greatest care; and at length made it out, with the small light still burning at her stern. Rowing round it, he was thinking of mounting by a cord hanging over the side, when a galley belonging to the Thames police shot out from the shadow of the ships and wharfs on the other side of the river, and a loud authoritative voice told him to

“ Hold hard ! ”

In another instant the boat was close to him, and at the same moment a man appeared leaning over the side of the schooner. He had evidently been keeping watch upon deck.

“ What have you got in that skiff, master ? ” asked one of the police, as he got hold of one of the rowlocks, and drew the two boats together.

“ You are welcome to look, as well as to all you can find in her, except the sculls,” answered Vincent carelessly.

The man inspected the boat by the light of his bull’s-eye lantern; but, as Vincent had told him, there was not a vestige of anything moveable beyond the sculls and footboards.

“ Umph ! ” said the chief of the party in a surly manner. “ And yet I am sure this is the boat. I know her well. Jump upon deck, and give a look round.”

The men mounted upon the deck of the schooner, and Vincent, at their command, accompanied them. He immediately recognised, in the person of the man who was keeping guard, the waggoner who had brought him and Bolt up to town in the winter, and a nod of recognition passed between them.

The police, six or seven in number, began to investigate every part of the ship, and in a short period returned, stating that everything was the same as when they had last seen her. The attention of the leader was, however, attracted by a very suspicious-looking cask upon deck.

"What's this?" he inquired of the man on board the vessel.

"Only water," replied the other, as he carelessly kicked the tap round with his foot, and let some of the contents run out upon deck.

"It's all right," said the inspector, as he ordered the men back into the boat, adding, as he followed them,

"We haven't got hold of you yet."

"Nor never will," answered Vincent's companion, in a low voice. "The 'Weasel's' the downiest craft in the Pool. When you catches her asleep, you've only got one more to take unawares, and that's the devil. Well, Mr. Vinson, what brings you here?"

A few words of explanation sufficed to let the other know everything, who did not betray any remarkable astonishment at what he was told, being apparently perfectly habituated to similar revelations.

"Did they think I was engaged in smuggling?" asked Vincent.

"Like enough," replied the other. "They can't open their eyes very wide, though, yet. You thought that was water, now, in that tub, I'll lay a pot; didn't you?"

Vincent answered in the affirmative, unwilling to lessen the inward chuckling at his deception, which the man was evidently enjoying.

"Who'd have thought the end of the tap went into a bladder of water, and all the rest was filled up with sperits? some of the old sort, too. I'll give you a drop, if you'll come below."

Vincent followed him down into a little smoky hutch, where his companion was not long in producing one of the foreign-looking bottles he had observed on their first meeting. But the continuous excitement which had kept up his energies was now over; and, after a few minutes, fairly

worn out with the harassing events of the last four-and-twenty hours, he threw himself carelessly upon the floor of the cabin, and was soon plunged in a deep and heavy sleep.

CHAP. XII.

MRS. CHICKSAND AND CLARA SCATTERGOOD ARE EACH
ALARMED BY AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

WHEN Vincent awoke, which was not until noon, the Pool presented a far different appearance to what it had done on his arrival. For then all was dark and mysterious: no sound was heard except the deep black water, as it rushed and gurgled by the piles and vessels: nor was there any light beyond the river-side lamps, or an ever-burning red fire here and there upon the wharfs, reflected in long, broken, and quivering lines upon the surface. But now all was light and animation; the sky was clear, and the Thames, catching its hue, sparkled in the sun; whilst everywhere motion and activity prevailed, and the banks and ships were alive with busy masses.

Vincent found that, by some means or other, Bolt had contrived to reach London during the night, and was now on board the "Weasel" as well. At his suggestion, our hero rigged himself afresh in some rough nautical habiliments, of which there was a tolerable choice on board, and then expressed his intention of going on shore, contrary, however, to Bolt's wishes, who scarcely considered such a proceeding safe, under existing circumstances. But Vincent had learnt that the whole of his family were in town, and was now most anxious to discover them, heedless, in this one end, of whatever might accrue therefrom. Their address was still unknown; and, until some clue to it was obtained, every exertion to discover them in mighty London was hopeless. At last he recollected something had been told him about his brother being at Merchant Tailors'; and with certainly but a faint hope of learning much there-

from, he determined to go to the school, and find out, if possible, some tidings of his father and mother.

Accordingly, towards afternoon, he pulled on shore, and landed at one of the stairs just above London Bridge. Thence passing along the waterside, through a labyrinth of bales, tubs, and bars and pigs of iron, he at length arrived at Suffolk Lane, and entered the portals of the school.

The boys were all in, but he heard the hum of their voices through the open casements sounding in the almost monastic seclusion of the cloisters. All was so calm and tranquil,—so completely did the spirit of repose, inseparable from a venerable building, pervade the place, that Vincent almost wished, after the feverish turmoil he had undergone, that he had no other lot to look forward to than that of remaining there, unnoticed and unknown, for ever.

At last the school broke up, and the boys came shouting and whooping down the old staircase, checking their mirth, however, as they saw Vincent, who was reading the tablets in the cloisters, on which are painted the names of those of the scholars who have filled the offices of monitors and prompters on the different “election days.” Then several of them formed a cabal in a dark corner; and, when this council broke up, one was sent to ask Vincent what he wanted,—a little boy, of course.

“Have you had a fellow here named Scattergood?” inquired our hero.

“Fred. Scattergood?—yes,” answered the other readily.

“He boarded with us at Snap’s. He ran away, though, the other day.”

“Do you know where he lived?”

“Yes,” replied the boy—it was little Jollit, “Cashbox,” as Plunkett facetiously termed him,—“in Kennington Road. I went there yesterday with Gogsley to tell his mother.”

“Whereabouts is the house?” asked Vincent eagerly.

“I don’t know the number: it’s on the left hand, with a plate on the railings, and the name of Chicksand.”

“Thank you,” said Vincent; “that will do.”

And without saying another word, he hurried away.

leaving little Jollit to retail his interview to the others, who were anxiously waiting to hear it; and having wondered who the strange visitor could be, at last made up their minds that Freddy had joined some desperate band of pirates and this was one of them come to propose a treaty of ransom.

Heedless of his position, Vincent crossed Southwark Bridge, and walked on rapidly through the Borough, until he came to Kennington Road; but, on reaching the house, his heart sank within him, and he faltered in his purpose. He had been long away, — his parents still believed him following the last occupation they had procured for him. And now his unexpected appearance, the terrible position in which he was placed, although in comparative innocence, and the victim only of circumstance, and his own loose but venial conduct: the effect it might have upon his mother, to whom he was deeply attached, — his father, he knew, would take it as smoothly as he did everything else: — all these things were well sufficient to make him pause before he ventured to the house.

He walked backwards and forwards several times, looking anxiously at the windows, in the hopes of seeing some of his family. But no one appeared; and at last observing a policeman, who was watching his movements somewhat suspiciously, for his appearance was not the most respectable, he mustered up sufficient determination to walk up the little black garden before the house, and ring at the bell.

In a few minutes it was answered. Mrs. Chicksand opened the door a little way, sufficient to show that the chain was up, and peeped through the aperture, in a state of flour and *négligé* toilet. The instant she saw Vincent, however, she exclaimed in sharp accents,

“No — nothing to-day: we’ve lucifers enough to blow up the parliaments and Bedlam. I’ve told you before not to ring.”

And then, banging the door in his face, she left him on the step.

Vincent’s perception enabled him to see immediately that it was a case of mistaken identity: so he rang again, upon

which Mrs. Chicksand appeared in the area in mighty wrath, and spoke of the police and custody.

"You are labouring under a mistake, my good woman," said Vincent, speaking through her oration.

"Good woman!" replied Mrs. Chicksand, with increased indignation. "Who are you calling a good woman, indeed? Don't good woman me: I'm the mistress of the house."

"Mrs. Scattergood lives here, I think," said Vincent, not heeding her wrath.

"Yes she does; and she isn't at home," angrily returned the landlady.

"Because I am her son," continued our hero.

The admission checked some very volcanic speech Mrs. Chicksand was about to explode in. She looked at him for a minute, first in amazement, then in doubt, and lastly disappeared, and in a few seconds opened the street-door, with all sorts of apologies and expressions of wonder.

Vincent soon learned, to his sorrow, that his father and mother were out, and would not return until evening, having left home in great trouble, upon receiving the news of Freddy's desertion. But at the same time he got the address of his sister, and every particular connected with her present situation, as well as Mrs. Chicksand's volubility allowed, every other sentence being interlarded with allusions to the economy of her establishment.

"To think I could doubt it! Now I see the likeness!" she went on, "and had heard Miss Clara talk of you. But I was quite alone, and Lisbeth is gone for Mr. Bodle's things—drat him!—who owes two months, and broke the second-floor teapot but last night, having melted a knob from the Britannia metal by putting it on the hob. I ask ten thousand pardons, sir."

"Don't say anything more about it," said Vincent.

"No, I won't," continued Mrs. Chicksand. "Taking you for the sailor, with two little creeters as well, who sells the lucifers, in clean check shirts, that don't go off when rubbed against the nutmeg grater; or else the man that leaves the pens and soap, in great distress, to keep the bill

clean, and call again ! Well—only to think ! as I say to C., there's no knowing nobody, especially back-parlours."

"Are they all well ?" asked Vincent, contriving to put a word in, wedge fashion, between the sentences,—“ I mean my family."

"All well, thank goodness," said Mrs. Chicksand, "and pleasant people in a house to have to do for, except Mrs. Scattergood, your mother, a nice lady, and not proud, who had the bile yesterday, and was going to send for a doctor. But I said, when C. has the bile, it's hiccory-piccorry alone that cures him, with pilly-cochy, and nothing else ; and that costs twopence over the way. It cured her too," added Mrs. Chicksand triumphantly. Then dropping her voice, she added confidentially, "But, lor, sir, it's all anxious—nothing else."

"I fear it is," murmured Vincent, as his countenance fell.

"In fact, I doctor all the house," continued the unwearied Mrs. Chicksand, as she took up her apron and rubbed the scutcheon of the latch-lock on the door. "And ill enough they've been, since Mr. Bodle took to learn the bass violin. But he suffers himself from it—that's one comfort," observed the lady, rubbing the scutcheon very hard, as though it had been Mr. Bodle himself ; "and yesterday, when all the fires were out, he would have gruel made, because he said he'd got that stomach-ache in G sharp again. I think he'd better pour some gruel into his bass violin. I said to him but yesterday, tincture of rhubarb is the only thing to do that fiddle good."

Vincent allowed her to run down, and then ventured to put several more questions regarding his family ; after which, in spite of her invitations for him to stop, and expressions of the surprise it would be to his father and mother, every one of which went like an arrow to his heart, he quitted the house, uttering some vague speech about returning that evening, when he had got his things.

Evening was approaching, and he was again wandering about the streets, with little more than a shilling in his pocket. Although anxious to see his parents, his mind

had been almost relieved, when he heard they were not at home, so much did he dread the meeting; but he, nevertheless, resolved to call upon his sister. He had eaten nothing that day, and began to feel faint for want of nourishment; and, moreover, he did not intend to see Clara until dusk, well knowing that every minute he passed in the streets and the open daylight was comparatively one of peril to him. So he turned into a public house at the side of the Surrey theatre, — he had frequented it during the time he was connected with Mr. Fogg in the fortunes of the “Lee Shore of Life,” — and, entering the parlour in the rear, called for bread and cheese and ale.

There were a few people in the different boxes, minor actors and supernumeraries connected with the establishment, who were drinking gin and water, whilst they awaited the hour which called them to their duties. They did not recognise him, and Vincent sat listening to their conversation, which was entirely upon theatrical subjects, and chiefly provincial. His attention was somewhat attracted by hearing the name of his simple-hearted, but kind, patron mentioned. Mr. Glenalvon Fogg was reported to be “doing great business” at Birmingham; his “Lee Shore of Life,” — which he had been engaged there to “bring out,” having crossed the country by easy dramatic stages, from Norwich, had proved a hit, and the treasury of the poor author was filling therefrom. Mr. Bodge, also, the adapter of French farces, was reported to be at Paris for a holiday; which he enjoyed by attending all the theatres in turn, every night, and rapidly translating and forwarding the most successful pieces, act by act, to England, that he might not be forestalled.

Vincent remained some little time after those individuals had left. His hunger was appeased, but he was still feverish and thirsty; and he sat there drinking for another hour, in the false hope of driving away the depression which weighed down his spirits, until, when it was quite dark out of doors, he arose, somewhat heated by his potations, and set off again for Fitzroy Square.

In less than an hour he had reached the Constables' house, according to the direction which Mrs. Chicksand had given him. He knocked at the door—a single knock, which was not answered; then, another, and, lastly, he pulled the bell rather violently, and set it ringing for some little time, until it spent its energy in single sounds, with long and undecided intervals between them, before the last of which, however, the extreme plush answered the door.

"What did you want?" said the servant, somewhat grandly, but withal astonished that a person of Vincent's appearance should dare to summon him so imperiously.

"Does Miss Scattergood live here?" asked Vincent.

"No," replied the extreme plush. "Mr. Constable lives here. There's a governess of that name in the family."

"That's quite right," said Vincent. "I wish to see her."

"You've rung the wrong bell," returned the man. "This is the one you ought to have pulled."

There were two bell-handles on the door-posts, with brass plates, labelled "*Visitors*" and "*Servants*." The man pointed to the latter.

"Damn your bells!" ejaculated Vincent, with a force that made the extreme plush flinch for an instant. "Go and tell Miss Scattergood a person wishes to see her."

There was something so determined in his tone, that the man made way for him to enter the hall. He then went to inform the butler of the circumstance, looking at Vincent, however, very suspiciously, and taking two hats and a cloak from their pegs, as he disappeared down the kitchen stairs.

Immediately afterwards the man in private clothes appeared, and walking towards Vincent with a very important air, desired to know what he wanted with the governess. A sharp, determined answer, however, put an end to his inquiries, and he slowly turned on his heel, and proceeded very deliberately up stairs.

Vincent heard music going on in the drawing-room as the man left him; but it stopped suddenly as he delivered

his message; and then the door closed, and he was evidently coming back again, followed by the soft rustling of a girl's dress; for the foot fell too lightly to be heard.

In a fresh access of trembling expectancy Vincent awaited his sister's approach. Clara's first movement was one of fear and mistrust, as she saw the apparent stranger who was waiting to see her; but the instant her brother spoke she recognised him, and with a faint cry of mingled surprise and pleasure, flew into his arms. The butler had waited very composedly to see the result of the interview; but an intimation from Vincent that his presence was not required, in no very courteous tones, induced him to descend the kitchen stairs, although his head might have still been seen in an attitude of attention, on a level with the bottom of the balusters.

There was a hurried and painful greeting between the brother and sister; for she saw before a minute had passed, from Vincent's manner, that all was not right. And in a very short period he had told her everything, suppressing, or rather softening, the darker portions of the story at the same time.

"And what do you want?" she asked tremblingly, as if she feared the answer. "Is there anything on earth, Vincent, that I can do for you? I did not think that, when you came back to us again, it would be like this."

And she hung upon her brother's neck, and burst into tears.

"Come, my little Clara, be a better girl than this," said Vincent, in a kind and soothing manner. "I would not have come, if I had thought it would have annoyed you. But there is no one else that I could go to."

"Why have you not been home?" asked his sister,—"or rather," she added mournfully, "to where papa and mamma are living. We have no home now!"

"I have called there this evening, and they were out. I cannot go again."

"And why not, Vincent?"

"I feel I dare not: they would not receive me. I do not care what becomes of me now."

"Oh! go home,—pray, dear Vincent, go home. Who else in the world, do you think, would receive you so kindly, or forgive your faults so readily, as your own father and mother?"

She pressed his hand earnestly as she spoke, to give force to her advice; but Vincent remained without answering.

"But what do you want?" she repeated anxiously. "For heaven's sake, Vincent, tell me what you want?"

"I cannot stay in London a day longer," he replied. "They will take me if I do—and yet——"

"And yet—what?" she interrupted eagerly.

Vincent hesitated until she repeated the question with increased anxiety, and then exclaimed almost with desperation,

"Clara, I have not got one farthing in the world!"

"Why did you not tell me this before?" she answered. "Stop—wait here—only an instant: I will be back directly."

She quitted her brother's arm, and flew up stairs, leaving him for a few minutes a prey to the sharpest emotion; but almost directly she returned and pressed a small packet into his hand.

"I had been working this purse for you so long, Vincent," she said, "thinking that I might perhaps send it to you in a letter, if you did not come back. We have thought so much about you."

"There is money in it, Clara?" said Vincent, as he looked at the purse—a piece of fairy net-work of bright-coloured silk, adorned with glittering beads and tassels, and forming an odd contrast to the rough hands and general attire of the holder.

"Yes, there are five pounds. Uncle Gregory made us a present when I came here; but I spent the greater portion of it on things I was obliged to have. The same wardrobe that I had at home did not do to come out with."

"But what have you got left?" asked Vincent.

"Oh, quite enough. I had seven pounds—there are

five, and I have got two. Indeed, indeed, I don't want any more. My expenses are not very great, you know."

The smile with which she endeavoured to accompany these last words died away upon her lips.

"Hark!" continued Clara; "they are ringing in the drawing-room—perhaps it is for me. Oh! Vincent, what shall I do when I go up again? I cannot bear to part with you, and yet you must not stay."

"I will not, Clara," replied her brother, as he prepared to depart. "You shall hear from me soon. Do not tell them all at home; and, if you can do so safely, write to Amy Grantham. God bless you!"

He kissed her cheek, wet with tears, and hurried away. There was a fervent adieu between them, and then Clara closed the door, and, scarcely mistress of her senses, went up, pale and quivering, to the drawing-room.

CHAP. XIII.

IN WHICH MORE CHARACTERS, SHAKSPERIAN AND MECHANICAL, MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE.

BEYOND doubt many of our readers, who incline to the equestrian performances at Astley's, are perfectly well acquainted with an "act of horsemanship" entitled "*The Courier of St. Petersburg*," exhibiting the manner in which despatches are popularly supposed to be conveyed under the Russian governments; and which, if faithfully portrayed, is exceedingly remarkable. An equal division of labour between several horses is apparently the chief end sought to be obtained by this singular method of travelling; for the "courier" jumps from one to another with wonderful agility; now getting one in front, now a second, anon a third; then making them go behind, running before, or catching up the remainder, until he collects them all into one line, and straddling the whole six triumphantly, makes a grand exit.

The writer of a novel of everyday life in periodical divisions resembles, in some measure, this courier, if the chapters of the tale be substituted for the horses. For although some are in advance of a certain point, and others behind, yet he must keep his eye upon all of them at once, now bringing one forward, and now the other, yet at the same time so managing them as to collect them all into one space at the conclusion of his undertaking.

And, like the aforesaid courier, in order that the audience may not get weary of the performance, and begin to hiss, he must, from time to time, produce certain effects in the course of his act ; which effects are not looked for, or found necessary, in plain, straightforward road-riding. But this, by the way.

Our scene once more changes, and to the little town of Henley-in-Arden, in Warwickshire. It was a wet evening ; and the wind and rain had entered into a combination to sweep the one principal street of all its people, driving along with unrelenting fury. Nobody was about, and apparently nobody was expected to be ; for the doors of the shops were all closed, and the solitary candles in their windows had burnt down, unattended and uncared for, until their wicks were embellished with cocked hats that threatened to overbalance the entire structure. Even the inns had closed their doors, except now and then, when a head was protruded at the approach of one of the coaches which the railways had yet spared, and which rolled through the village, swaying from side to side with its load of drenched passengers, who, being thoroughly wet through hours before, had now become quite reckless of consequences, and patiently received down their necks, or in their pockets, the torrent which streamed unceasingly from the umbrellas of their neighbours.

The rain did come down ; and came down pretty liberally, too : there could be no two opinions about that. Everybody could see the house over the way plainly reflected in the overflowing ruts of the street : and the puddles leapt again with its violence ; whilst the splashing cataracts from the eaves and spouts of the dwellings were

industriously doing all they could to wash away the entire footpath, pebbles and all. There was nobody to dispute its right, and it felt that it was master, having completely got the better of everything except the old church-clock, which, sheltered in the belfry, did not appear much put out by the weather, but tolled out its information when required, just as usual, and then dozed again for the next hour, as if nothing was the matter.

In the small parlour of one of the humblest inns of this little town there were two persons seated before a fire, which, as it struggled and climbed amongst the hissing and spiriting wood, had evidently been lighted for the nonce. One of them was a middle-aged man, with chinchilli-coloured hair, apparently combed into various directions with his fingers ; a species of toilet he was still pursuing as he dried a faded cloak, which, stretched on the backs of some chairs, was steaming before the fire. The other was a tall, spare man, with a face like a good-tempered hawk, and very restless eyes,—so ever on the move, that, without any unpleasant distortion, they constantly appeared to be looking all ways at once. He had a glass of hot brandy and water upon the hob of the fireplace, and a long clay pipe, the smoke of which he was trying to puff out in fanciful rings, as he sent it floating in the atmosphere of the room.

“ Still going it,” said the latter, as he listened to the ceaseless gush of a water-spout outside the door.

“ Marry, ’tis a fearful night,” returned his companion, turning the cloak, and looking wistfully at its drenched texture, “ a fearful night and a stormy. Ho ! within there ! ”

A clumsy boy — the drawer of the hostelry — answered the summons. The last speaker inquired what time the latest conveyance would pass towards Birmingham ; and being told that there was the chance of a carrier’s waggon in about an hour’s time, he ordered a pint of ale, and some powdered ginger, which he commenced to mull, rather literally, amidst the smoky fire, in an inverted tin fool’s-cap.

"Been to Warwick, sir?" asked the tall man sententially.

"Gramercy, no, sir!" replied the other; "but I shall mark to-day in my calendar with a white stone. I have been a pilgrimage to the alpha and omega of Shakspeare's life at Avon's Stratford—the chamber and the chancel!"

This speech seemed slightly above the comprehension of the tall man. He winked his eyes, and puffed his pipe two or three times, as if to clear his intellects before he observed, —

"Ah! Shakspeare — yes: I've heard his name somewhere, I'm sure."

The other opened his eyes very wide, and regarded his companion with astonishment. After a minute he asked, —

"Did you never visit that hallowed room, in which he was born?"

"Oh! now I remember," said the tall man. "I've read it on a board outside the house as I went through the street. No; I never did: there was not much to see, I expect. It looked just about the poorest place in the town."

"But, oh! how rich is association!" returned his companion; "the shrine at which all the great and good of earth have bowed. I slept last night in that consecrated room."

The tall man returned no answer, but looked at his companion for a second or two, elevating his eyebrows until it appeared that his entire forehead had the property of being pulled up like the calash of a bathing-machine. The other continued, in the conventional manner of some one connected with the stage,

"The scene of Shakspeare's birth represents an interior, meanly furnished; there is a practicable window in Flat, supposed to look into the street; a fireplace, Right; a large oaken chest, Left; a bust of the poet on a box, Right Second Entrance. Music."

"What music?" asked the tall man, who appeared to have some glimmering understanding of what the other was describing.

"Some mountebanks, who were by chance in the street,

and whose performance I had been watching. My excursion formed a species of juvenile night in my season of relaxation. The tumbling and tomfoolery came first: the chaste and intellectual succeeded."

"I don't call tumbling 'tomfoolery,' though," said the tall man.

"It is excellent in its way," answered his companion; then, recurring to the Shakspeare-house, he added, "An ancient woman was my guide; and when I asked her if I might sleep but one night in that thrilling interior, she appeared surprised. But I pleaded inspiration; so she borrowed a mattress, and put it on the ground, with high-backed chairs, hung with old drapery, round me. I had bright dreams that night."

The tall man kept contemplating his companion, as he puffed his pipe, with increasing curiosity.

"I dreamt," continued the other, "that all dramatic distinction was abolished in the pathos of the heart. I saw the bust of Shakspeare animated, as he clasped the persecuted Susan Hopley to his bosom with one hand, and extended the other to the British Seaman, whom the sight of a woman in distress had unmanned. It was a sweet night; and I rose early in the morning, and wandered by the Avon. I did not go back again."

"I think I shall try that on myself, when I go there," said the tall man; "it's a capital plan to save bed and breakfast at an inn. Is the house open to everybody, and that old woman, the only one who keeps it for the governor?"

It was evident that the tall man was not quite comfortable in his mind as to who Shakspeare was. He kept wrinkling his forehead, and scratching his temple with the end of his pipe, as he repeated the name audibly to himself several times. At length the light seemed to come.

"Don't he act plays?" he asked.

"He wrote one or two," replied the other with mild sarcasm, which, however, did not appear to be taken. "And I have been there as an 'umble brother, to inscribe my name upon that consecrated whitewashed wall; albeit

there was but little room for a pin to stand upon its head. But it is there, upon the right hand of the fireplace, and near the ground ; between Edmund Kean and John Smith."

"What's the advantage of so doing, may I ask?" inquired the tall man.

"At present—none: for futurity, much," returned his companion. "The world allows no need to living authors. Were the Swan of Avon now amongst us, his warmest admirers would become his enemies; the critics would pitch into his plays; and he himself, if more than commonly successful, would be called a humbug."

"That's true," said the tall man, perfectly understanding the tenor of the speech, if he was not altogether acquainted with the subject of it. "It's a great thing to be a humbug, though; I've been called so often. It means hitting the public, in reality. Anybody who can do so is sure to be called a humbug by somebody who can't."

"Good!" exclaimed his companion, applauding with his hands.

"It has been my own fate often; but I trust to posterity. In future times, I hope the birth-place of William Shakspeare will have no occasion to blush, because its fireplace is inscribed with the name of Glenalvon Fogg."

An honest pride radiated over the anxious visage of the individual as he pronounced his name. For it was indeed our old acquaintance, the dramatic author.

"Are you Fogg, of the Brummagem?" asked the tall man.

"I have the honour to be myself," returned the author, with modest bearing.

"How odd that we should meet here!" returned the other. "Don't you know me?"

"I cannot say I do," replied Mr. Fogg.

"Come, now, guess: can't you tell?"

"No, by my troth; and on this goodly steel," answered his companion, mechanically laying hold of the poker, as he scanned the other from head to foot. "Come on, fair sir; thy name and calling?"

"Well, then," said the other, with the importance of making an interesting revelation, "I'm Rosset."

"What, Rosset of the midland circuit?" inquired Mr. Fogg.

"Yes."

"No!"

A fellowship appeared to be immediately established between them. Mr. Rosset handed Mr. Fogg his glass, who pledged him therein, and stated his delight at seeing him, strengthening the avowal by his halidame, as was his wont on interesting occasions.

"Our lines come so close," said Mr. Rosset, "that I can throw a good deal into your way, if you'll write for me. I've got seventeen caravans about the country now. Three of them are dancing-shows, and they've all got plat-forms. Now I want some plays for the first, and some good gags for the other. I pay, you know, the best of prices; but, then, I must have the best of articles."

Mr. Fogg was not going to catch at the offer too willingly, although it suited him. He pleaded press of urgent business, and the rapacity of the theatres for good pieces and constant novelty. Heaven save the mark!

"Oh! you can do it," said Mr. Rosset. "But how about the other chap—Shakspeare; him you were talking about? Will he do anything—is he dear?"

"Yes—dear indeed—to every Englishman!" murmured Mr. Fogg, with apostrophizing accents.

"Well, that settles him, then; he won't fit my purpose," said Rosset. "How's business at Birmingham?"

"Shy," mournfully observed Mr. Fogg, elevating his eyebrows, and shaking his head. "I find domestic dramas of the deepest interest and most harrowing distress produce no effect in manufacturing towns. The people there see them all for nothing at their own homes much better done."

"I heard your Jane Shore drew money," remarked Rosset.

"Permit me," said Mr. Fogg modestly, with a mild smile: "the *Lee Shore* I think you mean. Yes, I may flatter myself that was a card: but Birmingham being an

inland town, had a great deal to do with it; the 'British Sailor,' and the 'Storm at Sea,' with the 'Schooner clawing off the leeshore,' harrow the audience. At Bristol or Liverpool they know what seamen, schooners, and the ocean mean: you might as well play a translation of *The Forty Thieves* at Bagdad. Critics would cavil at the localities, and point out the anachronisms."

"Shouldn't wonder," answered Mr. Rosset, once more in the clouds of his pipe and intellect mingled together, from Mr. Fogg's long words. "That's why I never take my wild Malays to Monmouth, because it's their native place. But now to business, for I'm in a fix. I'm travelling at present with my mechanical figures; my son's at Coventry with the circus; and the missus is looking after the wild Malays and Circassian giantess at Wolverhampton. Now, you see, I want a new piece for the mechanical figures. There's seven in working order—four ladies and three gents, and it must bring in the Scaramouch with the telescope neck, the Turk who tumbles to pieces, and the cracker-tailed hobbyhorse, that always ends the play. Come, I'll stand a five-pun' flimsy for the piece—what do you say to it?"

"It is a difficult task," said Mr. Fogg, after a short deliberation. "Couldn't you leave out the cracker? That's rather descending to the illegitimate. Shakspeare never produced his interest by tying crackers to horses' tails."

"Blow Shakspeare," replied Mr. Rosset; "perhaps he'd got a different set to deal with. My actors have all got wooden heads."

"It is not a rare idiosyncrasy in the histrionic profession," remarked Mr. Fogg.

"Here's a sketch of my new proscenium," said Mr. Rosset, unfolding a paper of questionable cleanliness. "Isn't that legitimate? Look at the motto, 'All the world's a railway.' It was 'All the world's a stage,' but I had it altered, for it's more appropriate now-a-days; go-a-head's my maxim."

"I should like to have seen the company you wish me to write for" said Mr. Fogg.

"That's soon settled," answered the other; "follow me."

They left the tap, and paddling across a wet yard, whilst Mr. Rosset sheltered the candle in his hat, entered a large outbuilding, something between a carpenter's shop and a stable, and fitted up roughly as a small theatre, with primitive benches of rough deals laid upon tubs. A lantern hung from one of the rafters; and underneath Mr. Fogg observed a man lying asleep upon one of the seats, and snoring loudly.

"Ah! he was a capital clown to my circus," said Rosset; "only he fell short of the spring-board in a somerset, and put his hip out of joint; so I gave him a berth here. Halloo! Jeffries!"

The man, who was lying in the attitude of a slumbering stage-robber, started up upon being called, and at Rosset's directions foraged in a large chest, in which the "company" resided.

"That's good—ain't it?" said the proprietor, as he took up a small man on horseback, made of painted brass, and propelling it along the floor, made it imitate the natural movements of the animal by concealed rackwork working on its wheels.

"I'd bet anything, now, you don't know what that is?" said Mr. Rosset, with a mixture of admiration and mystery. Then, without waiting for a reply, he continued, "That little horse rode many a hundred times across the window in Leicester Square when things were up in that quarter. This is what I wanted to show you, though."

He took a doll from the man, about four feet high, dressed as a countryman, with a jovial expression of countenance. Various strings were attached to its limbs, which all worked through a hole in the top of his head; and these were fastened to sticks which the master held in his hand. Then standing on a form, Mr. Rosset gave certain motions to the figure, which, with the exception of a remarkable flexibility in the knee-joints, enabling them to turn all ways at once, might have been accounted very true to life.

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"This is Tommy," continued Mr. Rosset; "he's the cleverest doll I've got, and the favourite with the audience. When I'm travelling alone, and get dull, I usually sets him up opposite to me. He looks so uncommon merry, that I always think I've just said a good thing, and he's enjoying it. Look at that, now."

And here Mr. Rosset, with increased admiration, put the figure through various fresh attitudes.

Having thus shown Mr. Glenalvon Fogg the style of actors he was to write for, they were about to commence arrangements respecting the payment, when they were interrupted by the clumsy boy, who informed Mr. Rosset that the waggon from Warwick had stopped at the door.

"It contains my properties," said the whole ale show-man. "Let us see them put out."

They went back to the door of the house, with the late clown limping after them; and there found the waggon and its steaming horses stationed. The driver was giving his aid to remove some large packing-cases; and in this he was assisted by a young fellow, who had apparently been his fellow-passenger. The ear of the dramatic author was attracted by the tones of the voice: and he advanced the candle, which were sputtering with the rain-drops, to look at him.

"Like some forgotten melody those accents fall!" exclaimed the dramatic author, "and win my fancy back to other days. Ah, yes! is it?—it is! Mr. Scattergood!

"Glenalvon Fogg!" cried Vincent—for it was our hero,—less dramatically, but with no less surprise, as he seized his old patron's hand, and shook it warmly. "This is indeed singular."

"And do we meet again, my ancient friend?" cried the good-hearted dramatist, giving vent to feelings which he had long pent up from lack of sympathy! "Come to my arms! But—belay there—belay! pipe up the main-brace. My dear eyes! I'm running over at the lee-scuppers like a loblolly-boy."

To the bystanders—even including Mr. Rosset—the speech was somewhat enigmatical. But Vincent under-

stood his old friend's idiom, and again shook him warmly by the hand as they entered the house, together with the packages.

"And what has brought you here?" asked Mr. Fogg, after he had hurriedly introduced Vincent to his companion.

"The mere chance of delivering those goods," said Vincent. "But I was bound for Birmingham in search of you. I heard at the old tavern by the theatre that the 'Lee Shore' had done well here."

"Ah!" cried Mr. Fogg, and his features lighted up with pleasure, "do they know there how we have carried all before us? I should think that would be a split nib in Mumford's pen—eh?"

Mr. Mumford, it may be remembered, was the rival nautical dramatist, author of the "Nore Lights; or, the Wreck of the Goodwin."

"And how have things gone on in town with you since I left?"

"Oh, not very well," replied Vincent, as his countenance fell. "I will tell you everything another time. In fact, I have been working my way down here as cheaply as I could, in the hope of finding some situation that it was in your power to give me at the Birmingham theatre."

"Alack, alack!" cried Mr. Fogg, "the 'Lee Shore' has finished its run. But stop; our friend, Mr. Rosset, may know of something. Do you want a hand in any of your enterprising concerns?" he asked of the proprietor.

Mr. Rosset, who had been gazing with great curiosity all this time at Vincent, simply inquired "if the gentleman could throw a trampoline over four horses, twelve bayonets, and through a balloon."

"I am sorry to confess my inability," said Vincent.

"You're a well-built fellow, too," said Rosset. "However, of course you will wait here until to-morrow, and then we will have a talk. I've all sorts of lines, if any will suit you."

The continuance of the bad weather was such, that Mr. Fogg—at all times a bird of extreme passage—resolved

upon not going back to Birmingham that evening. Mr. Rosset, hoping they were not over particular, offered the whole of his theatre as a resting-place, for the accommodations of the hostelry were limited ; and after a short conversation they adjourned thereunto, Mr. Fogg spreading his revered cloak upon a heap of sawdust, which, he said, "was a couch that kings might envy." But Mr. Rosset, having found that some of his company had sustained injury from the wet, would not seek his pillow,—which was a roll of green baize used to divide the six-penny from the shilling audience,—until he had seen them all looked after. With Jeffries' aid, assisted also by Vincent, ever ready to turn his hand to anything, they were disposed about every available part of the interior, to air and dry ; and then the trio disposed themselves to sleep wherever their preference found it practicable.

The lantern still hung from the rafter, throwing its light over the building, and upon the forms of the inmates, who were all soon asleep, with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Fogg, whose fevered vigils were such as poets ever have. Indeed he was already elaborating the plot of the intended piece : in furtherance of which, he was looking at the comical forms of the actors who hung around. And together these made up a quaint tableau ; especially a lady in a short waist and feathers, like the princesses in the children's story-books ; the comic peasant, in the continuous enjoyment of a joke near the door ; the Scaramouch with the giraffe-neck, who appeared to be peeping into the lantern ; and the hobby-horse and rider, who were keeping a very intoxicated guard over the recumbent forms around.

At length everything was hushed in repose ; and even Mr. Fogg effected a compromise between sleeping and waking, in which the real and ideal were so intimately blended, that he could distinguish between them no longer. And then his fancy revelled in wondrous flights ; his wooden companions started into life, and amidst them all the statue of Shakspeare, with its neck stretched out in the telescopic fashion of the Scaramouch, regarded him

with a complaisant air, and appeared to encourage his dramatic labours, ere he executed a *pas seul* in the most approved fashion of modern ballet.

CHAP. XIV

MR. JOE JOLLIT ARRANGES THE "PROVIDENT CRICKETS'" FÊTE
AND FANCY FAIR AT ROSHERVILLE.

THE society of Provident Crickets, in which Mr. Jollit filled several important offices, was an institution for the promotion of philanthropic harmony, with ulterior objects of universal benevolence and brotherly love.

But, although these objects were publicly announced, yet was the society itself a secret one: and various mystic ceremonies of initiation were performed when a member joined it, from which the prying eye of vulgar curiosity was carefully shut out. What these ceremonies were, is not known; but invidious reports whispered that some of them bore a resemblance to those only seen in the woodcuts pertaining to old editions of Fox's Martyrs, and portraying an unpleasant passage in the life of St. Laurence. These ideas deterred many mild and timid individuals from joining the society; although, certainly, the house in which the Crickets met was never disturbed by the shrieks of agony which might be looked for as the accompaniments of a similar ordeal, in the common order of things. And as the nonces usually reappeared with a cheerful and contented aspect, those who were not in the habit of being led away by wild and romantic notions came to the conclusion that the great secret consisted in there being none at all.

After the harmony, which was the first consideration, the chief end of the society was the assistance of distressed members and their families; but as few of the members had families, and none were distressed, the funds were usually expended in festivity. An outward show of

charity was, however, still kept up ; and on this particular occasion, as the fines had been trivial, and the balance in the hands of Mr. Jollit, who was the treasurer, equally so, he determined by a *coup de maître* to raise them, that they might still have enough to provide the annual excursion for the members. He therefore proposed a fancy fair and fête at Rosherville, which scheme meeting with the approbation of everybody, was forthwith agreed upon.

The entire arrangements were confided to Mr. Jollit ; and very joyous indeed did he become with the excitement of the preparations. Every one of his friends was pressed into the service, and their interest requested with their female acquaintances to furnish the stalls. Be sure that Mrs. Hankins's sister was not forgotten, nor Mrs. Hankins herself ; and these ladies even condescended to keep the stalls, influenced also by Mr. Snarry, who was himself a "Cricket ;" and whom Mr. Joe Jollit pleasantly bantered upon his exertions before their fair friends, telling him that, although he was a bachelor now, and had no family to provide for at present, yet there was no telling what might happen some day. And hereupon did Mr. Snarry blush deeply and pretend not to hear : which innocent deception Mr. Jollit, in heartless disregard of his feelings, would not allow ; but accompanied his speech by poking him in the ribs, and making a noise with his mouth similar to that used for the propulsion of horses. And on these occasions Mrs. Hankins's sister grew suddenly short-sighted ; and was compelled to bring her eyes close to the Berlin-work pair of braces she was engaged upon, counting five squares instead of three, and making the needle come up in all sorts of unexpected places from underneath, until the provoking Mr. Jollit would ask her what was her opinion upon the subject : upon which all further assumption of inattention was perfectly useless, and then Mrs. Hankins's sister declared that Mr. Jollit got really too bad ; she never knew such a dreadfully rude creature !

Mr. Bam was not behindhand in his contributions. He offered at first to dress a salad for one of the stalls ;

but as this was a singular article for young ladies to retail to purchasers, he promised to furnish some autographs of eminent personages, having found at some charity fair in London that they met a ready sale. But as these were much easier to write than to collect, he set to work, and produced several very remarkable ones, including some of Shakspeare, Joan of Arc, and William Tell ; to which he gave an appearance of great authenticity by writing them first on fly-leaves torn from old law-books, and then hanging them up the chimney of his chamber until they were duly smoke-dried and discoloured. And this gave Mr. Joe Jollit a hint to get up some valuable relics with the aid of an intelligent turner, from whose wood-stores were produced more pieces of the Royal George, piles of old London Bridge, rafters of the Exchange, and Stratford mulberry blocks, than would have been sufficient to construct snuff-boxes, silk-reels, and watch-stands for each member of every family at present inhabiting the civilised globe.

But Mr. Bam also knew a lady—a client—high in rank, and gifted in intellect, whose name he was not at liberty to state, but who had written a charming work ; and she had promised to give the MS. to the society, if they would print it, and sell it in aid of their funds. It was called “The Rainbow of Reality,” and was sure to prove an immense hit. In fact, it had been seen by every publisher in London, and they had all declared that it was really too good to be thrown away upon the senseless average mass of readers, which was their only reason for declining it. And therefore the authoress had determined that it should force its own way, despite the liberal offer made by the conductors of the Monthly Muff—a *repertoire* of the *beau monde* and *courier des* “fiddle-faddles” *de Londres*—to print it all for nothing, in their pages, which had a strong hold upon public sympathy, by their affecting claims to be considered as a sort of literary free hospital—a gratuitous asylum for the rejected and incurable.

Mr. Rasselas Fipps was not overlooked in the course of Mr. Jollit's exertions, who had almost persuaded him

either to dress as a shepherd, and play his flute at the entrance of the maze, with two hired lambs to sport before him ; or in the costume of a minstrel to pervade the gardens, or watch from the lonely tower, and sound a clarion when he saw some indefinite acquaintances on their winding way. But with respect to the first performance, Mr. Joe Jollit, upon reflection, decided that it would get very slow after the first ten minutes ; and that Mr. Fipps's mind was not exactly of that order to return any playful observations which would doubtless be addressed to him by jolly gentlemen inclining to waggishness. And as to the second, no musical-instrument maker appeared to understand practically what a clarion was, although they admitted they had often heard the word used, no more than the timbrel, lyre, and sackbut which Mr. Jollit severally proposed ; so that at last the guitar was the instrument fixed upon to accompany Mr. Fipps as the troubadour, since he could play a few chords upon it ; and it was also agreed that he would be useful in writing popular waltzes upon tinted paper, to be retailed at the stalls.

Of course there was a great deal of amusement in getting the things together. One lady sent an article she termed a *brioche*,—something between a pie and a pillow, made of harlequin-coloured worsted, and which served the funny gentleman to throw covertly at Mr. Snarry's head for one entire evening ; others cut blue stockings and black legs out of coloured paper, and, securing them in envelopes, wrote outside, "The Gentlemen's Horror," or "The Ladies' Aversion," as the case might be, their object being to astonish the enterprising purchaser, and produce merriment upon being opened, with pleasant banter, and the opportunity of saying smart things. Then there were butterfly pen-wipers, and cockatoo pincushions, and perforated pasteboard netting-boxes, with pencilled views of Carisbrooke Castle and the Bridge of Sighs without end : and wax flowers, and rice paper flowers, and shell flowers, and feather flowers, and flowers in water colours, Persian painting, and oriental tinting, in all of which the fuchsias

predominated ; which, placed in the gardens themselves, would have enhanced their reputation as the depository of rare botanical plants, for with the exception of those specified, it was perfectly impossible, even to the comprehension of the oldest gardener, to tell to what class they belonged. Mr. Bam's brother, who was secretary to a cemetery, somewhat scandalized the conductors of the fair by sending a toy made like a little hearse, with music inside—a simple melody of three notes recurring every time the wheel came round, and giving rather an air of joviality to the progress of the vehicle ; as well as a velvet-covered box, about nine inches long, in the form of a coffin, with a silver plate, on which was engraved the word "*Gants.*" But this unseemly mirth was very properly repressed by Mr. Snarry, at the instigation of Mrs. Hankins's sister.

The fireworks, the dancing, and the miscellaneous amusements were equally cared for by Mr. Jollit ; and a few evenings before the fête, a committee was held at his lodgings, or rather his "rooms," as he called them, to make final arrangements. The ladies of Mr. Hankins's domestic circle graced the meeting, as well as Mr. Rasselas Fipps and Mr. Bain ; but few of the "Provident Crickets" themselves were there, as they believed firmly in Mr. Joe Jollit's enterprise.

"Now, we must remember," said Jollit, "that this fair will be set forth as in aid of the funds for providing an asylum for the members. Where that asylum is to be, I don't exactly know ; but my present wishes incline to the Star and Garter, on Richmond Hill."

"The idea ! I never," exclaimed Mrs. Hankins's sister, as if shocked at the deceit. "What dreadfully sly creatures you are !" And then she continued, in all innocence, "What a pity it is you have no children, Mr. Jollit !"

The funny gentleman appeared aghast with surprise, and overwhelmed with confusion at the observation, as he stammered forth,

"Mrs. Hankins — now, really !— your sister — upon

my honour — such a very singular remark for a lady to make !”

“ Now, Mr. Jollit, you know what I mean,” cried the sister, blushing to a wonderful extent.

“ Oh, perfectly ; it needs no explanation,” answered Mr. Jollit, concealing his face with well-feigned surprise and terror in his handkerchief. “ Hankins — can *you*, as a brother-in-law, allow this ?”

There was a general laugh at Mr. Jollit’s distress, during which Mrs. Hankins’s sister recovered sufficiently to say,

“ I mean there ought to be a school to walk about the grounds.”

“ Oh ! now I comprehend,” said Mr. Jollit ; “ very clean children, just wrung out and ironed, who look as if their faces had been polished with sand-paper and bees-wax.”

“ Not a bad hint,” observed Mr. Bam ; “ because then the newspapers could say, that ‘ the children paraded the ground, and excited general attention by their clean and healthy appearance.’”

“ Could we hire an infant school cheap, for the day ?” asked Mr. Jollit.

“ Well, I think such a thing might be contrived,” returned Mr. Bam : “ I will see about it. I wish, though, you would give me something to do.”

“ We’ll make you Comptroller of the Banquet-hall,” replied Jollit. “ You can mix salad and make punch there all day, if you like ; besides, your public exhibition of cutting up a fowl without taking the fork out, and shaving a cucumber on your knife, will make a feature in the day’s amusements.”

Mr. Bam was so gifted in every description of dinner-table legerdemain, that he inwardly hoped the suggestion might be carried out.

The distribution of the contributed articles to the different stalls was the next thing thought about, the choicest being allotted to Mrs. Hankins’s sister, as well as the tent with the pink lining, to cast an agreeable hue over her features, with orders not to give change for any money tendered. And those friends were also selected, and their names

written down, who were to walk about from tent to tent in fashionable attire, making unlimited purchases to entice others to buy,—such, it was understood, being the custom in similar institutions of the highest grade. And when a slight allusion was made by Mr. Snarry, in the kindness of his nature, to the probable injury the fête might do in the case of one or two persons who got their livelihood by retailing fancy articles, Mr. Jollit happily set all things straight, by showing that the things sold at these meetings were always of that perfectly useless description, which nobody on earth would ever think of patronizing anywhere else.

Amongst Mr. Bam's autographs were some very interesting documents, far beyond mere names. There was a note from Tarlton to Shakspeare, dunning him for tenpence, for the copyright of a joke which the popular author had introduced, unacknowledged, into one of his comedies, and on which a talented friend was already writing a great book, to prove which joke it probably was. There was also a private letter from the author of Junius, with his real name and address; and two verses from an unpublished poem of Burns. These were ticketed very highly, and considered the great gems of the fair, as well as two songs arranged by Mr. Bodle, and presumed to be written by him, being answers to "Love on,"—one called "Leave off," and the other "Lay down,"—the latter addressed to his hound Bevis,—as imaginary a quadruped as the *Mauthe Doog*, in the Isle of Man, but of which a portrait adorned the title, drawn after a celebrated painter, or rather a pretty considerable distance behind him.

It now only remained to provide Mr. Fipps with his troubadour's dress for the Rosherville Minstrel; and, to further this, Mr. Joe Jollit accompanied him the next day to London, and introduced him to a respectable Hebrew costume-merchant.

It was a curious shop, from whose windows a number of masks were always gazing at the streets, in the separate panes. Some regarded the passers-by with a calm stoical indifference; others insulted them with unpleasant grimaces;

and others, again, looked merry and hilarious into the windows of the opposite periodical shop, as though they could read the jokes from that distance ; and there were a few so singularly polite and affable in expression, that you almost felt inclined to raise your hat to them, until you saw they were just the same to everybody, which diminished your respect for them as much as if they had been real heads, instead of pasteboard ones. Beyond these there was little show. A tunic, or soldier's coat, carelessly thrown down, a dress sword, or a coloured print, figuring the unknown costume of a country that did not exist, were all the objects displayed in the window.

Mr. Jollit and his friend entered the magazine, but not until the funny gentleman had collected a crowd before the shop of an adjacent tea dealer, by gravely returning the salutes, bow for bow, of a mandarin, who sat nodding all day in the window. They were conducted up stairs, to a room which was covered with splendid dresses, the greater part of which, the proprietor told them, were bespoken for a private costume-ball about to be given in Fitzroy Square. Here Mr. Fipps was so dazzled, that he began to waver between a troubadour and an Andalusian nobleman, and had even some notions of a suit of gilt leather armour, until Mr. Jollit suggested the propriety of keeping to the minstrel's costume, which he finally chose, after much minute fitting and complaining. The guitar pertaining to it was not taken, because it had been apparently used for the clever pantomimic trick of being broken over the head of some individual repugnant to the clown's feelings, which assault, albeit mirth-provoking, and usually expected when a guitar, looking-glass, or warming-pan makes its appearance, is not calculated, in a musical point of view, to improve its tone ; and so another was hired from a music-shop.

They returned to Gravesend with their "properties" that evening, after a pleasant journey, in the course of which the funny gentleman had almost persuaded his companion to dress up on board the steamer, "to give him confidence ;" adding, that they might perhaps pick up

sufficient to pay their fares by the attempt ; but this Mr. Fipps had not nerve enough to undertake.

He was, however, very pleased with his dress ; for, after all had retired to rest that night, Mr. Fipps was heard wakening soft cords, as well as every body in the house ; and Mr. Snarry, whose curiosity led him to peep through the key-hole, affirmed that he saw Mr. Fipps fully attired in his costume and so carried away by its romance, that he was bearing his bolster (which was supposed to have fainted, and to which a night-gown pulled over it gave some semblance of the human form) over what Mr. Fipps considered a rugged pass or crumbling ramparts, for to such did the *glamour* of his poetic fancy convert the chairs and a chest of drawers ; and, having borne off his treasure to his satisfaction by his own trusty sword, (represented by his flute,) the soldier-minstrel then rested in his lonely bower, which was his French bed, and poured forth a lay of love and chivalry, evidently peopling his second floor with a glittering throng of listeners, as he rehearsed his romaunts for his display at Rosherville.

Nor was it until the warning knocks of restless lodgers from above, beneath, and around him brought his minstrelsy to a close, and dispelled his bright imaginings, that he divested himself of his attire, and sought fresh visions of romance in the magic world of dreams.

CHAP. XV.

CLARA SCATTERGOOD CONTINUES TO FEEL THAT SHE IS A
GOVERNESS.

WHEN Clara came to herself after the shock caused by her brother's unexpected appearance, she found that she was in bed in her own room, to which she had been conveyed in a state of perfect unconsciousness. She was in a raging fever ; her brain appeared glowing like live embers beneath her heated forehead ; and she lay quivering

with hysterical tremor so violent, that the faded tassels which edged the scanty drapery of the bed vibrated with her agony.

She was not long in recalling the incidents of the evening, and they came back as keen and as painfully vivid as when they had occurred. The recollection of them was, if anything, worse than the reality, and nearly brought on a fresh accession of delirium. No one came near her; she was alone and unheeded; and all through that dreadful night she wakefully kept count of every quarter that sounded from the adjacent chapel, or watched the slow progress of the discs of light from the holes in the shade surrounding the taper which had been left on the floor, as they crept slowly up the walls of her dreary room.

She would have given worlds for the relief of one flood of tears, but they would not come. Her eyes were dry and smarting, her lips parched, and her burning cheek found no comfort—not even for a moment—on her equally heated and unrefreshing pillow. All the misery of her first night in her present situation, which she had begun to hope she had got over, returned with tenfold sharpness; the terrible “demon of the bed,” that invests our lightest sorrows with such hopeless and crushing anxiety, reigned triumphant over its gentle victim; and yet, when the daylight crept through her uncurtained windows, she shrunk from it, as though in her broken spirits she preferred to hide her distress in the gloom of night, fearful and unrelieved as was its dark dominion.

Wretched she had indeed been on the evening of her arrival at the Constables’, and in that same room; yet she felt it was nothing to her present misery. Could her “employers”—for such they doubtless considered themselves—have entered into her distress, even with the slightest sympathy, how pure but forcible an example would it have offered of the silent misery of that amiable class of girls, who, if education refines the feelings, have theirs doubly sensitive,—who, whilst they are but too often treated with everbearing arrogance and ignorant

assumption, have real need, in all Christian and human love, of the kindest attention and comfort, from the very circumstances which call them forth from home, that it is in the power of their self-thought patronisers to bestow.

Morning came at length, and with it sounds of life and motion in the house. Still no one approached her room ; but the light she dreaded brought with it a slight diversion to her overwhelming wretchedness. As her eye wandered restlessly over the bed, it was caught by something glittering at her feet. She laid hold of it, and found, to her astonishment, that it was a diamond-pin of costly manufacture, and which, to increase her wonder, she recollected to have seen worn by Mr. Herbert on the preceding evening.

Whilst completely lost in endeavouring to account for this mysterious discovery, the nurserymaid Bingham tapped at the door, and came into the room. She was a very civil young woman, and inquired kindly how Clara felt, with an evident wish to be of some service to her ; but at the same time she appeared disinclined to give any answer to Clara's inquiry about the events of the preceding evening, subsequent to her re-entering the drawing-room. It was evidently a subject involving some unpleasantness ; and before Clara had mentioned anything about the brilliant,—for in her loneliness the very servant had become her confidante, Bingham left the room, with the intention of making breakfast for the governess.

In about half an hour she returned, accompanied by all three of the children, but evidently against her will, as might be inferred from sundry preceding scuffles and angry chidings on the stairs. They ranged themselves in a row whilst Bingham placed the breakfast on a chair at the bedside, as though Clara was to be regarded in the light of an exhibition.

"We know something—don't we, Neville?" said Eleanor ; "what mamma said."

"Be quiet, Miss Eleanor," said Bingham, sharply, "or else I am sure Miss Scattergood will be very angry."

"I'm glad she's ill," said Neville, "and so's Blanche,

and so's Eleanor, because we sha'n't learn our books any more."

"You haven't got any oranges, I know," continued one of the little girls. "We always have oranges when we're ill, and such nice things. That's because my papa's got ever so much more money than yours. Oh! ten hundred million times as much!"

"Hold your tongue, Miss Blanche, this moment!" exclaimed Bingham. "You'll have your mamma after you directly."

The threat, usually potent, had, however, this time no effect, — not more so than that of the chimney-sweep in shirt-sleeves and top-boots, who was popularly supposed to live in the coal-hole, and be ready at all times to ascend to the nursery upon the least symptom of revolt. Eleanor only continued, pointing at Clara,

"We don't care. Mamma says she's to go away, because she behaves bad."

"She didn't say 'bad,' now, Miss. Oo-o o-o-o!" interrupted Blanche, making faces at her sister. "She said she wasn't respectable. Ain't you respectable?" she continued, addressing Clara.

Weak, and broken down with agitation, Clara at length burst into tears, beneath the pain which the children heedlessly inflicted: whilst they themselves commenced a violent squabble as to what their mamma had said exactly: terminating their struggle to possess themselves of a sightless doll which Neville carried, by throwing it amongst the breakfast things. This led to a general *mêlée* with Bingham, in the middle of which Mrs. Constable sailed, rather than walked into the room; and then the tumult was abated, as she ordered Bingham to remove the children, whilst Clara tremblingly awaited the result of this interview.

"I suppose it is unnecessary for me to state we do not see any further occasion for your services, Miss Scattergood," observed the lady, as the door closed, in a tone of the most freezing severity. "Common delicacy might have restrained you from making appointments in my house with

any of the low people you unfortunately appear to be connected with."

The hot blood rushed to Clara's pale face as she listened to this insulting insinuation. She replied with all the indignant force she could command,

"I made no appointment, ma'am; nor have I occasion to be ashamed of *any* of my friends. It was my own brother who came here last evening!"

The lady of the house was evidently unprepared for this admission. But she had heard of Vincent through her slight acquaintance with the family, and directly saw the probability of Clara's assertion.

"At all events," she continued, in somewhat milder tones, though just as cold, "you might have spared me the unpleasantness of that scene last night, especially before visitors. What could they have thought of it?"

"I will explain, and tell you everything, ma'am. In a very little time you shall know all. But, at present —, this morning, at least — I have scarcely strength."

And the hurried manner in which the poor girl drew her breath almost between every word bore out the truth of her statement. She was really very ill.

"You had better have some medical attendance," said Mrs. Constable, "for it is always unpleasant to have sickness in the house. And this ball approaching, too! How very awkward! Do you know any medical man?"

Clara replied, that beyond her own family she had scarcely an acquaintance in London. Mrs. Constable continued,

"Dr. Herbert — father of the gentleman you saw last evening, who carried you up stairs after all that to-do — I was really so annoyed! — will be here to-day; and I will ask him to write you a friendly prescription. You can get it made up at the chemist's, which will be cheaper than having your medicine from our apothecary; and I suppose every trifle is of consequence to you."

"It is indeed!" Clara mentally ejaculated. And then she added, "I do not think I need a medical man. I

shall be better very soon, and have no wish to call one in unnecessarily."

"Oh, but I desire it," answered Mrs. Constable, somewhat haughtily. "It is quite bad enough that my children should lose all their tuition, without having a comparative stranger ill in the house. And just at this unfortunate time! I never knew anything so vexatious!"

"I wished to write to mamma," said Clara timidly. "I suppose, ma'am, you would have no objection to her coming here?"

"Oh—no—I suppose not," answered Mrs. Constable. "I don't see any objection at present."

"Nor to Miss Deacon, who would write for me."

"Who is Miss Deacon?" asked the lady gravely.

"She is governess to Mrs. Armstrong," replied Clara. "I met her in the square."

"Oh! certainly not!" returned the lady, "if she belongs to the Armstrongs, I believe she is well-conducted. I will send Bingham to you when she is at leisure."

And then, as if she was afraid of being led to make any more concessions, Mrs. Constable left the room, without a word more, or taking any notice of Clara.

She fell back on her pillow, exhausted with even this short interview, as the lady departed. "She says I am to leave," thought Clara: "how shall I then be able to assist them at home?" But next came some vague idea that Mrs. Constable said Mr. Herbert had carried her up stairs last evening: nay, the jewel was still in her hand, as evidence of the fact; and the thought of this, even in all her sorrow, appeared to comfort her with an entirely new feeling. It was very strange. What could it be?

CHAP. XVI.

MR. ROSSET RETAILS HIS EXPERIENCES TO MR. FOGG AND VINCENT.

MR. Fogg's brain, which, slumbering or waking, was ever at work, never allowed him to oversleep himself; and he

was the first of the quartette that awoke on the following morning. His visions had been ultra-dramatic. He had dreamt of more plots and jokes than would have furnished all the theatres for the next twelvemonth — things which in his sleep he pictured as the greatest hits ever known, but which only waited his *réveil* to have the charin dispelled, by the exposition of their utter incomprehensibility. So it ever is with the false positions of happiness brought about by sleep. No one ever anticipated, with shuddering nausea, the medicated beverage of unpleasant flavour to be taken early in the morning, without having rosy visions throughout the night that the dread task had been many times accomplished in spite of the demon phial, with its cork worn on one side so rakishly, that danced continually and in mockery before him. And, under such circumstances, how bitter was the first dawning of the actual truth !

Mr. Fogg aroused his companions as though they had been the robbers in the "Miller and his Men," and he their captain, informing them at the same time "that the eastern clouds were chequered with streaks of light." And then they assembled at breakfast in the small parlour wherein they had met the night before.

Mr. Rosset had announced his intention of going over to Coventry to see how the "circus" was going on, as the dolls were not to perform at Henley-in-Arden for a day or two ; and, proposing that they should take the chances of the road, they started off when the meal was finished, leaving Jeffries in charge of "the celebrated mechanical company."

"I hope you've caught an idea," said Mr. Rosset to the author, as they sallied forth from the town: "if not, I must hunt up that Shakspeare, whatever he charges."

"I think," replied Mr. Fogg modestly, "I have hit upon a subject that will exactly suit you. I only wish you could get rid of the cracker-tailed hobby-horse at the end."

"Ah ! I can't do that," returned Mr. Rosset: "you must bring him in somehow or another, because that's always the great effect. Besides, the smoke of the powder clears the house and saves the candles."

"Then I submit," said Mr. Fogg; "it shall be done."

"I ought to know what the public like," said Mr. Rosset, "after my long experience. Fifteen years have I been a showman."

"You must understand the line pretty well," observed Vincent.

"I understand nothing else," answered Mr. Rosset. "I've made a fortune two or three times, and gone into speculations. They always failed, and I was obliged to come back to the shows again."

"And then you succeeded?"

"Always, in everything,—from a peep-show to a pavilion. It was by keeping wide awake, sir. If there was anything making a noise in the world, I got it. If I couldn't do that, I made one like it. Look at the mermaid, and the club that killed Captain Cook, with the very native who used it. Those black wild Indians were great cards for me." And then, as if wound up to enthusiasm by the recollection of former triumphs, Mr. Rosset continued, in the same tone of voice that he would have used in addressing a crowd from one of his platforms: "The dolphin! the beautiful dolphin! There is no deception. The performing pig, and banded armadillo. The silver-haired Circassian, and pacific savage of the Indian seas. They were all mine!" he concluded triumphantly to Vincent.

"I should have thought the savages odd customers for a family circle," said Vincent, with a smile.

"Seldom had a word, sir, with any of them," replied Rosset: "men of the gentlest manners. The only time we ever used to quarrel was when they kicked at eating the uncooked meat; but that was always *the* point. Many of them now sweep the London streets. It was my last savage chief that knocked up Spanner."

Mr. Fogg repeated the name to himself several times. He evidently wished to know who Spanner was; but his mild nature and natural timidity prevented him from asking.

"Spanner, sir," continued Mr. Rosset, coming spontaneously to his relief, "was the only opposition I ever

knew. His caravan followed me everywhere ; and I never had one novelty, but he got another. When I started the leopard boy, who had had the scarlatina struck in by cold, at Warwick races, he brought out the panther girl with lunar caustic wash : I know the chemist's he bought it at. And when I exhibited the interior of the cotton-mill outside, with a little jointed woman who turned the wheel, Spanner immediately picked up a working engine at Wolverhampton, and let off the steam whenever I began to speak. My Welch Indian knocked him up, though, because his didn't know any war chorus : and then I bought his concern — literally for a song."

Mr. Fogg indulged in a low chuckle, and said, "Very good," as he proceeded to write something on a scrap of letter paper, with an inch of blunt lead pencil. He had seen a joke in the word "song," where none was evidently meant—at least, to judge from the constitution of Mr. Rosset's mind.

"And then I suppose you added it to your own concern?" said Vincent.

"Not at all, sir ; that would have done no good. I kept up the opposition," continued Mr. Rosset, "and got my own people to abuse me from the neighbouring platform. Whenever I had a dwarf or a giant, I always tried to get another, smaller or larger, for Spanner's ; and the excitement was immense : we did not know where to put the people, sir. I didn't care, you know, which was the greatest hit, because all the money came to 'one pocket.'"

Mr. Fogg looked intense veneration at Mr. Rosset. He was evidently a thing to worship.

"The best thing I did in that line," continued the other, "was the basin gag with that man Jeffries you saw last night. I had engaged a fellow from Lambeth, Signor Genoa Verona, to spin the basin, you know, on the fishing-rod, at my circus. Well, he didn't take much : so I got Jeffries to hire a room at an inn, and then to send handbills out, stating that Verona was an impostor, but that Jeffries could do all, and more than the other did. There was a challenge of fifty pounds a-side ; and the

match was to come off at my circus. What a house we had!"

"Good—was it?" inquired Mr. Fogg.

"Slightly immense," replied Mr. Rosset: "so good, that I told both my men to make a drawn match of it, which Verona did by breaking the basin. We kept them kee-sawing thus for three or four nights; and the excitement crept up so, that one evening they broke the doors down. And then came the grand *coup*. At the end I said they were so perfectly equal, having each kept up two basins upon two sticks, that, regardless of expense, and ever anxious to secure the rarest talent, I had engaged them both. The rush was greater than ever; and we took three hundred pounds out of the town."

Vincent had listened with interest to Mr. Rosset's candid account of his singular speculations.

"There is a great deal more tact and knowledge of the world required to keep a show than I thought for," he exclaimed.

"Well, but everybody keeps a show, more or less," said Mr. Rosset. "Look, when genteel folks give a party, what is it? Why, a dancing-show to collect the crowd they're going to subsist upon. Great doctors drive about in their carriages for the same reason that I enter a town with my band in a van, and all the horses I have got in hand: it's an advertisement. Do you think the show-folks are the only people in the world who dress themselves in spangles for a particular period of the day, to look like nobility, and dazzle the bumpkins below as they strut in the sun? Because, if you do, you are very much mistaken."

They did not hurry themselves upon their journey; for the day was fine, and the air soft and cheering. The rain, too, of the preceding evening had refreshed the thirsty earth, and the foliage of leafy Warwickshire had never looked so green and pleasant. Rosset entertained them with his reminiscences, as they now and then stopped to rest and bait at some little roadside hostelry; and after their meal Mr. Fogg generally got lively in his imagination,

and talked as a book ; a considerable part of their journey being occupied by an attempt of that unequalled gentleman to prove what a hit Shakspeare could have made of Hamlet if he had introduced some "real water" for the death of Ophelia, and concluded with a *tableau* of the ghost carrying off the king and queen in a shower of fire.

Vincent joined in the conversation with both his companions ; but he was evidently ill at ease, in spite of the efforts made to think lightly of his troubles, which habitual recklessness had rendered a parcel of his disposition. But ever and anon his countenance fell, as dark thoughts crossed his mind, returning with double gloom by their contrast to his forced unconcern, in spite of the kind "Cheerly, my son!" which the good-hearted dramatist occasionally addressed to him.

Mr. Fogg saw that something serious weighed upon his spirits, and therefore conventionally recommended him, from time to time, to overcome his sorrow ; common advice to one in trouble, by the way, but seldom really consolatory or alleviating. For, however we may dam up the tide of misery by the force of our own reasoning and determination, it still keeps accumulating, and at last will have its way, breaking down our barrier of false resolutions, and rushing onward with tenfold impetuosity. The majority of mankind in this case resemble rockets. The more their inward tumult is choked, the higher they rise for the time : but, that time past, the worn-out case falls down again with increased momentum, from the forced elevation it had attained.

The pointed spires of the lofty churches were glowing in the afternoon sun when they reached Coventry ; and their rugged and corroded masonry stood out with picturesque effect in the ruddy light. As they neared the city, Mr. Rosset pointed with pride to various posting-bills against palings, walls, and even trees, setting forth the attractions of his circus, and surmounted by huge woodcuts of human pyramids and equestrian gymnastics. Every one he found out he asked Mr. Fogg and Vincent "if it was not rather the thing:" and at last, with the apparent idea that they

could not see to read themselves, he made them halt opposite one of the most available, whilst he enumerated the leading features of the bill, commenting, as he went on, as follows : —

“ ‘ *Gorgeous Entrée of the Untamed Steeds and Costumed Equestrians in the Intricate Feats of the Wild Cotillion of Queen Elizabeth and the Tartar Horde of Pekin.* ’ Ah ! I should only like you to see that : eleven ladies and gents, led by my daughter-in-law ; that I invented myself. ‘ *The Bounding Ball of the Arena, Mr. Jones, surnamed by the editors of the leading Metropolitan Journals, The Flexible Curatii, or Olympian Air Diver.* ’ Fifty somersets, sir, that man threw upon his benefit.”

“ I should think that brought the house down,” observed Mr. Fogg.

“ Bring the house down ! nothing like it ! ” answered the matter-of-fact Rosset. “ Mine is built with the best of materials, and by the best of artists. No Brummagem here.” And then he went on : — “ ‘ *The daring but graceful Act of the Antipodean Equilibrist, Mr. F. Rosset,* ’ — that’s Frank, — ‘ *popularly known as the Energetic Whirlwind,* ’ he was born at Bristol, sir : without saddle or bridle, as you will see. Um ! ah ! — ‘ *Tranca Hispaniola,* ’ ‘ *The Foxhunter of Athens, or Tally-ho of Thermopylæ,* ’ ‘ *Billy Button.* ’ All right : that ought to do it.”

And having gone through the programme of many-coloured letters, his mind became relieved ; and they proceeded on their route.

CHAP. XVII.

VINCENT ENCOUNTERS AN UGLY CUSTOMER, AND GAINS
ANOTHER FRIEND THEREBY.

THEY went through part of the city ; and then turning from the populous streets, again got clear of the buildings ;

but not before Mr. Fogg had gazed upon Peeping Tom, and laid the mental keel of another drama, in which a real person was to take the place of the effigy, and thus overhear a conspiracy being plotted at the corner of the street, which would lead to the detection of the wrongful Earl of Coventry. At length they came to a large space of ground, in the centre of which was a mighty circular tent, with smaller ones attached to it — parasitical marquees of various shapes, and one or two of the ordinary yellow caravans and waggons taking their ease on the outskirts. The style of the entire structure was classically simple, save at one end, where a scanty piece of red serge festoon, edged with black, was stretched across the principal entrance supporting a scroll labelled, "Rosset's Arena of Olympian Equisition." At the side of this was a small tilted cart, wherein Mrs. F. Rosset sat on the evenings of performance to receive the money, in the bonnet and shawl of ordinary life ; at such times as she was not wanted to lead "Queen Elizabeth's wild Cotillion."

The proprietor threw back the canvass door with the hand of a master, and ushered his friends into the interior of the arena. It was getting dusk in the approaching twilight ; but one or two candle-ends, lighted upon a large parallelogram of laths which hung from the centre, cast a dim light over the arena ; and there was a transparent look about one part of the walls—if they might be termed so — that indicated a species of inner marquee, which, to judge from the shadows of individuals occasionally passing backwards and forwards, was inhabited.

Several huge packing-cases, four or five feet high, were disposed about the circus, and behind one of these an enormous dark mass could be perceived in the obscurity, now and then slightly moving. Mr. Rosset saw it, and immediately exclaimed,

"What, Hadgi ! poor old fellow ! are you back again ?"

The object that was looming about on the ocean of sawdust, now turned round, and moved towards the proprietor, as Mr. Fogg instinctively retreated, and sheltered

himself behind one of the large cases. Vincent immediately perceived that it was a large elephant, who now approached Mr. Rosset with a peculiar cry of recognition, and began to caress him with his trunk.

"So ho, Hadgi!" said his master; "how long have you been home?"

"Not twenty minutes, governor," replied a new comer, who entered from one of the inner tents. "I thought it best to bring him along by daylight, instead of waiting for dark. Besides, it advertised the shop, you know."

The speaker was a tall dark man, of almost Herculean form; with large black whiskers, and long curling hair of raven hue, which hung about his ears and down his back, mixing with the shaggy texture of a black bearskin wrapper, until it was difficult to tell where one ended and the other began. If every individual bears a likeness more or less to some animal, then this man resembled a bison. But the most remarkable part about him was the extraordinary expression of his eyes. They were large and piercing, of such an intense but indefinable significance, that those he gazed upon were directly riveted by his glance, as though they were the focus upon which all the power was concentrated, like the rays of heat sent through a lens. His hands were of gigantic size, covered with hair on their backs, as well as innumerable scratches, some of which were no trifles; and when he raised one of them occasionally to take a huge cigar that he was smoking from his mouth, a mountain of muscle rose from his arm, perceptible even under the coarse attire in which he was enveloped. He seized one of the tusks of the elephant, and turning the head of the animal on one side with apparently irresistible power, came close to Mr. Rosset and his companions.

"Scattergood," said the proprietor, who already appeared to consider Vincent as one of his *troupe*, "this is Mr. Brandon, our jungle monarch. Brandon — Mr. Fogg, an author."

The stranger raised his hat, and shaking his curls wildly about his head, replaced it. Vincent bowed, and Mr Fogg

was preparing some courteous address, when a ferocious roar broke forth from the interior of the cage against which he was leaning, of such unmitigated ferocity, that he sprang away from it as though the package had been a catapult, and he the missile. Nor did he stop until, choosing the larger of two evils, he had got on the other side of Hadgi. The roar seemed to be the signal for a general tumult; for the next instant it was answered in, if anything, louder and more angry tones from every one of the huge chests. At the deafening noise several men, dressed something between strolling players and stable-boys, entered the circus; and some females appeared from the opening of the lighted tent.

"Oh! that's it!" cried Mr. Brandon, in tones that harmonized well with the riot, "that's it—is it? Look here, Rosset,—here's a mouser. I drafted her from Atkins's only the day before yesterday—wild as the winds."

He turned a button, and pulled down the front of the box, discovering the iron bars of a cage, behind which a fine-grown tigress, crouched in a corner, was snarling a savage defiance.

"Come out of that!" said Brandon fiercely, taking up one of the iron-bars used by the travelling show-folks to make holes in the ground for setting their poles in, and poking the animal with very little tenderness in the ribs.

"Ah! bite away!" he continued, as the tigress caught the bar in her mouth; "you won't digest that very easily.—No, you don't!" he added, as the brute made a sudden clutch at his hand. "Oh, that's the game you're up to! We'll soon settle that, my lady."

To the terror of everybody present, Brandon walked round to the back of the cage, and opening a door, entered, in spite of Mr. Rosset's earnest entreaties to the contrary. So perfectly at his ease did he appear, that he took his cigar from his mouth at this instant, and quietly flicking away the ashes with his little finger—if it might be termed so—replaced it, and stood face to face with the tigress.

Every one in the arena seemed riveted to the spot without speech or motion. The daring act had apparently paralyzed them.

The animal quailed for an instant at the intrusion : but immediately drawing back upon her haunches, with her terrible teeth displayed to their fullest extent, and uttering a low guttural snarl, prepared to spring. Brandon kept his piercing eyes fixed upon her, watching every motion ; and so they remained, the man and the animal, for nearly half a minute, regarding each other like two accomplished pugilists. At length, with a roar of hate, the tigress flew from the corner of her den at her visitor. But, quicker than the lightning, Brandon saw her intent, and timed it so well, that doubling his huge fist, he met her with a blow on the head, which turned the animal's rush on one side, and beat her, reeling, against the bars of the cage, with a shock that threatened to burst them open. Instantaneously the tigress repeated her leap, and a second time she was beaten down by her opponent, who followed up the repulse by another heavy blow, inferior only to that from a sledge-hammer, which brought the blood spurting from her nostrils, and appeared to have stunned her. So thought Brandon as he approached nearer, intending to throw his whole weight upon the prostrate animal, when the tigress turned suddenly over, as if her whole spine had been dislocated, and made another bound. Brandon started on one side to recover himself ; but it was too late. His stooping position in the cage somewhat cramped his power ; and before he could collect the impetus for another blow, the spring of the animal—chafing and furious, and throwing her whole weight upon him,—drove him backwards, and he was pinned against the side of the cage, uttering a perfect shout of terror. At the same time the door of the den flew widely open. His cry was echoed by those outside, and the other beasts again added their roar to the tumult, as the oscillation of their cages from side to side showed how they were excited at the noise. One or two of the grooms darted off to the stable for some implement of attack : others fled precipitately ; whilst

Rosset, catching up the iron dibbler, thrust it with all his might against the animal's head, whose jaws were now reeking with its own blood. But this attack had only the effect of increasing her rage; and almost immediately Brandon, with a frightful oath, screamed in agony—

“She's fastened on my arm. I'm a dead man!”

Without a word, and before a moment had passed, Vincent was at the door of the cage. Not a second could be lost; in another clutch the fangs of the tigress might have been on Brandon's throat. He dashed boldly in, and threw his arms fearlessly round the animal's neck; then compressing his embrace with all the force he was able to collect, literally choked the infuriated beast from her prey, as some shreds of the coat came away in her talons. But he was not prepared for her thus so suddenly loosing her gripe; and losing his balance, he fell backwards through the door, together with the tigress, upon the ground of the open arena.

There was instantaneously a general flight of all who had hitherto been the lookers-on at this fearful encounter. But Brandon recovered himself in a moment, and following his antagonist, threw himself down upon the brute as she lay prostrate, still held down by Vincent, and struggling in the saw-dust. Again the blows fell like hail upon the animal's head: every roar became fainter and fainter, until, half-strangled, stunned, and nearly dead, Brandon drew the tigress by her hind legs to the door, and thrusting the body into the cage with his foot, closed it after her.

“You can come back!” he cried, as soon as he had drawn his breath. “Phew! I never had such a squeak before; and should certainly never have had the chance of another if it had not been for you. Give me your hand, old fellow: you're another!”

It was fortunate that Vincent's hand was a strong one; had it not been, Mr. Brandon's grasp would have crushed it like a vice. Mr. Rosset now re-appeared, with one or two of the others, who had thought it advisable to get out of the way.

“It's a pity this didn't happen on a night of perform-

ance," observed the proprietor ; "it would have made us at once. Scattergood, you're a wonderful fellow, and must join our troop. You shall be a jungle monarch yourself some day ; and I'm sure you're good for a tram-poline now."

"A timid voice called their attention to the spot whence it proceeded ; and there in the recess of an empty cage, the door of which he had bolted after him, shrouded by his cloak, and looking like a mild brigand in ambush, was Mr. Fogg ; in such great tremor and agitation, that their most earnest assurances of perfect safety were scarcely sufficient to bring him forth. But at length he emerged, and exclaimed, "I breathe again !" after the manner of the lady helping the captive prince to escape, when she informs the audience, as she looks from the window, that "he has passed the sentry unobserved. Ah ! he is seen, and one of the guards levels his arquebuse ! He fires !—he is lost !—no ; he has gained the eastern battlement—saved ! saved !"

During this interval Brandon had stripped up his coat, and exposed his arm, which was torn, and still bleeding from the teeth of the animal. It would have been pronounced a serious wound by anybody ; but he did not appear to think so, and merely applied some brown paper and vinegar, which he said was the finest thing in the world for every accident, in spite of Rosset's wish that he should go to a doctor.

"The remedy," said Mr. Fogg, "has certainly the authority of antiquity on its side. There is a legend respecting two children drawing water from an Artesian well on an eminence, who lost their footing whilst descending, by which one received a severe injury on the scalp. It appears the means employed by the mother were the same ; and with good effect. I studied the story once for the opening of a pantomime."

And immediately Mr. Fogg was lost in a reverie of reminiscences respecting the effects he meant to have produced ; until his thoughts were broken in upon by Mr. Rosset recommending them to bespeak beds at a

neighbouring public-house, if they wished any that night. Vincent would have been very well content with the sawdust of the circle for a couch ; but the proximity of a loose elephant, and several caged animals, was quite sufficient to deter Mr. Fogg from any such method of lodging ; and so, not wishing to desert his patron, he accompanied the author to a modest inn close to the circus, after reiterated expressions of gratitude from Mr. Brandon, and a promise from the proprietor of an introduction on the morrow to the mysteries of a circus.

CHAP. XVIII.

CLARA IS EXPOSED TO FRESH INDIGNITIES.

SEVERAL days passed before poor Clara had recovered sufficiently from the shock she had received, to leave her room. Her mother came every day to see her, and each time at parting wished to take her home again. But this Clara always objected to. Mrs. Constable, who looked in about every other morning with a few cold inquiries, for which the tuition of her children was a far more important motive than the health of their governess, had not said any more about Clara's quitting her situation ; and she was fearful, if she once went home, that something might occur to prevent her from returning. For, crushed and heartbroken as she was at Constable's, the prospect of being again dependant upon her own family, who could so ill afford it, and to whom every shilling was an object, was far more distressing.

Miss Deacon — the governess to Mrs. Armstrong — came in constantly to see her ; and it was not until Birmingham revealed it, that Clara found her kind acquaintance devoted at least an hour every morning to the children in the nursery before she visited the invalid. To this Mrs. Constable did not object, because, as we have stated, the Armstrongs were amongst her great connexions. And Dr.

Herbert also came frequently — a kind-hearted and excellent individual, with those friendly and soothing manners, which in some members of the profession excite so much confidence; and arise from the constant association with scenes of trouble and sickness acting on a disposition naturally overflowing with good feeling. He also brought her books (in the majority of which his son's name was written); now and then a bouquet of fresh flowers; and was altogether so gentle and attentive, that when he patted Clara on the shoulder, or putting her curls aside from her pale forehead, told her that she would soon be better, she felt tempted to throw her arms about his neck, and kiss him, as though he had been a second father. And one day, when Mrs. Scattergood was there, as she was about to leave, he insisted upon taking her the whole way home in his own carriage, stating at the same time that it was all in his way to see a patient, which in reality was not the case. Nor would he ever hear of receiving the slightest fee for his attention.

At length the low fever into which Clara had been thrown left her, and she came down stairs. She was somewhat comforted in her wretchedness to find that Mrs. Constable did not hint at her departure; but in the short period that had elapsed the children had become more unbearable than ever; and with her weak and shattered spirits, she was perfectly unable to keep them in anything like order. It fortunately happened, however, that at this period the approaching ball was all that occupied Mrs. Constable's mind; and the children, having heard they were to appear as fairies, or pages, or something of the sort, were so entirely wrapt up in the anticipation of display, and so engrossed in contemplating the bits of lama and tinsel which they knew were to adorn their dresses, that had they been as docile as lambs, it would have been equally difficult to have confined their attention to learning. And so they chiefly passed the time in quarrelling as to who would be the finest; and informing Clara of their conviction — the result of much discussion amongst themselves — that she had no money to buy anything half so

pretty. But these were not all the trials the governess had to undergo.

One morning, when Bingham had been sent out to walk with the children to some friends of the Constables, in St. John's Wood, on a message respecting the approaching gaiety, Clara was left alone in the nursery, very sad and lonely, thinking of home and its troubles, and Vincent, until her meditations had borne her down to the extreme of despondency. Everything around her appeared frowning and unsympathizing. The very inanimate articles about the chamber assumed a dogged, severe air ; a chilling *audible* silence impressed her with a double feeling of desolation : and even a few plants, which she had bought, and which were placed outside the window, were quivering in a cold remorseless air, as their petals fell one by one beneath its influence. Clara was indeed very, very wretched.

She had rung the bell for something that was wanted in the nursery, two or three times, without the least attention having been paid to the summons. At last the extreme plush leisurely walked up stairs, and having accomplished his mission, instead of leaving the room, began brushing up the hearth — for which there was not the slightest occasion, and apparently trying the variety of combinations that the position of the fire-irons could be made to assume. At last he spoke, with a presuming smirk : —

“ I'm glad to see you about again ; I thought you were going to leave us.”

He addressed these words to Clara in the same tone of familiarity that he would have used to the upper housemaid : and there was such an easy insolence in his manner, that Clara, without making any reply, walked to the window, and looked into the street. But the extreme plush was not to be so easily put down.

“ Do you like your place ? ” he inquired. “ I should think you found it rather dull up here ? Why don't you come down stairs now and then ? We're the right sort, you'll find.”

“ I will trouble you to leave the room ! ” exclaimed Clara, hurriedly, and crimsoning with indignation.

"Oh! no offence, if you're too high," continued the man; "only I thought, as you met that gent in the hall that night, you mightn't be above it."

Overwhelmed with mingled terror and rage at the insult, Clara hastily caught up her work, and was about leaving the room, when the man placed himself at the door.

"Now, don't be in a passion: that's a pity!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were a different kind of person, my dear, especially as you have lost the party you kept company with. Come; don't be cross! Make friends, now, won't you?"

He left the door, and advanced towards her, as Clara rushed to the other side of the table, and, hoarse with emotion, again ordered him to leave the room instantly.

But he only returned the command with an insolent leer, and appeared desirous of approaching still nearer; when Clara seized a water-bottle from the children's dressing-stand—the only thing, in the agitation of the moment, that she could lay hands upon,—and flung it with all her force at the head of the miserable menial who addressed her. The man reeled back, half stunned by the concussion, for the glass broke against his forehead, and cut it deeply; and Clara, taking advantage of this, darted from the nursery to her own chamber, locked the door, and threw herself upon her bed in a violent fit of hysterics, until a flood of tears came to her relief. At any time the results of such an insult would have been terribly severe; but now, weak and shaken as she was, and scarcely convalescent, it completely crushed her.

There was only one course to pursue; it was to inform Mrs. Constable immediately of the servant's insolent audacity; if this were not done, a licence would be given to all future similar indignities. And, accordingly, in about an hour, when she had somewhat recovered, having ascertained that the mistress of the house was at home, she descended, timid and heart-broken, to the drawing-room.

The children had returned, and were there also, having their dresses tried on, and being instructed by a cheerless little man, with an equally unhappy-looking little fiddle,

how to perform a species of juvenile *divertissement*. Neville, who was habited as a page, — not a boy in buttons, but that species termed “pretty” in popular ballads, — was roaring and stamping with anger because his sisters had got wings, and he had not; and Blanche and Eleanor were placed in remarkably unstable attitudes by the dismal, small professor, and were only restrained from expressing their dislike of such schooling by the consideration that they were showing off.

“Goodness gracious, Miss Scattergood, how ill you are looking!” exclaimed Mrs. Constable, as she saw Clara’s pale face, upon her entering the drawing-room. “I hope you are not going to be laid up again: really, I am sure I can’t tell what we should do without you just now. I don’t know what you think, but in spite of Miss Deacon’s kindness, the children appear to have gone back very much lately.”

“I like Miss Deacon better than her,” said Neville, nodding his head towards Clara. He was one of those terrible children who, whatever temper they may be in, always have their ears widely sensitive to what is going on around them, and prove that there is a direct anatomical communication between the organs of hearing and the mouth.

“So does mamma, sir,” said Blanche. “Mamma!” she continued, “now, didn’t you say that Miss Scattergood wasn’t so good as Miss Deacon?”

“Silence, Blanche, this instant, and attend to Mr. Scurry,” said Mrs. Constable. Then, turning to Clara, she added, “Did you want anything with me, Miss Scattergood?”

“I wish to speak to you for an instant, ma’am, if you were at leisure; but — perhaps now you are engaged?”

Clara looked round at the other occupants of the room, as if she did not like to say anything before them. For a wonder, Mrs. Constable perceived her meaning, or rather expressed that such was the case. She rose, and walked into the back drawing-room, followed by Clara, and closed the doors behind her.

‘ Now, what is it you have to communicate ? ’ said the lady with dignity, as soon as they were alone.

‘ I scarcely know if I am right in so doing, ’ replied Clara tremblingly. ‘ I hope if such is not the case you will excuse me. ’

‘ You will oblige me by coming to the point, Miss Scattergood, ’ returned Mrs. Constable ; ‘ for you see I have plenty on my hands just at present. ’

‘ I have been grossly insulted by one of your servants, ma’am, ’ answered Clara, ‘ and I have no one to appeal to for protection but yourself. ’

‘ Indeed ! and, pray, who was that ? ’

‘ Edwards, the footman. Had I been the lowest menial in your house, he could not have treated me with such cruel insolence. ’

Mrs. Constable remained silent for a minute, stretching a piece of tinsel-lace over her fingers, as if admiring the fabric, whilst Clara gazed at her with a flushed and anxious countenance ; for she was not pale now.

‘ Well, I think, ’ exclaimed the lady at last, — ‘ I think, if you are prudent, Miss Scattergood, you will let the matter drop. I make a point of never interfering with the quarrels of the domestics. ’

‘ But I am not one of your domestics, ma’am ! ’

‘ No ; I do not say that exactly. However, I must decline interfering in the matter, for Edwards is an excellent servant, and were he to go, I do not know where I could look for another. Besides, ’ she added, ‘ I cannot understand how any domestic of mine should cease to treat you with respect, unless, by some means or other, — I do not say voluntarily, — you had already forfeited it. I trust this will be the last I shall hear of it. ’

Mrs. Constable bowed gravely to Clara, as much as to inform her that she did not wish the conversation prolonged, and sailed majestically towards the door. But before she left the room, she turned back and observed to Clara,

‘ Oh ! by the way, Miss Scattergood — of course we shall expect to see you in the ball-room on the 14th ? I

do not wish you to go to the expense of a fancy dress ; for that would perhaps press rather hardly on you. A plain muslin, with a few flowers, will be quite sufficient : and if you choose to trim it with silver, my dresser can get you some strips at the lowest cost."

And with these heartless observations the lady quitted the room.

Clara remained in the same position for some little time after she had left, in the most perfect blank of despondency, almost paralysed by the cold and cruel indifference of her employer. But she was ere long compelled to accompany her charges back to the nursery ; and then, with a breaking heart and crushed spirits, amidst their squabbles and cutting remarks, commenced the daily heavy task of endeavouring to instruct them. It was no wonder that afternoon that her pupils at times read how or what they pleased without a remark from their governess, or obtained no answers to their wearying and useless questions. The mind of the poor girl was far differently occupied.

CHAP. XIX.

THE CONSTABLES' "BAL COSTUMÉ," AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ANY one with the most infinitesimal amount of perception could soon have discovered, had the opportunity been allowed them, that the domestic economy of the Constables was conducted on the principle of practising private parsimony to sustain public display ; and this was observable, more or less, in every one of their domestic arrangements. They were types of, perhaps, the largest class of the middling metropolitan circles, whose abodes range from the *passé* square to the West-end street, the patrician locality of which is but just beginning to be questioned.

Very early in the morning Mrs. Constable might be met making very large purchases at the shops in Tottenham Court Road, when there was but little chance of her great

acquaintances seeing her ; but in the afternoon, when every one was about, she encountered them in patrician thoroughfares, and at first-rate establishments, where she bought the least expensive article she could, consistent with the wish of appearing always to deal there. Her household arrangements were conducted on the same plan. Everything was made subservient to show : and a wide difference existed between the usual domestic meals, and those which even the presence of a few guests called forth. Nothing could then be more splendid than the appointments of the table ; but even in this there was economy, for all the articles, expensive as they had been at first, yielded good interest upon their outlay. The richly chased silver dish raised the six minikin cutlets it contained to a dignity that four times the quantity would never have attained on common earthenware. The modest moselle in its shining cooler, placed there for display alone, — since, in the absence of ice, there was of course no difference between the temperature of the silver vase and that of the room, — was thought far more of than if its humble bottle had been moving unobtrusively about the table. The *epergne*, with its cut-glass, and crown of wax-fruit, cost nothing to keep when it was not in use ; and when it was, occupied the place of a dish. The massive jug, sparkling from a thousand facets, turned the *vin ordinaire* of tolerable excellence into patrician claret : and so on with everything. Even in the ball Mrs. Constable was about to give, there was not one extra for display which had not been husbanded from the common routine of management, — not an extra wax candle for which the guests were not indebted as much to her frugality as to the bees which produced it.

At last the evening arrived, and the dowager-like gravity of Fitzroy Square was scared by unwonted clatter. It was a warm night ; and the blinds were up, and the windows open, which materially increased Mrs. Constable's satisfaction, already brought about by the sight of a crowd round the door, marshalled by two policemen, awaiting the arrival of the company.

The house had been certainly very well arranged. The

staircase was bordered by the choicest flowers, from the hall to the drawing-room, and long festoons of creeping plants were twined about the bronze balusters. All the doors had been removed; and in some instances their places supplied by more flowers, on either side of clear muslin screens. A small conservatory had been fitted up as a species of Turkish tent, with a rich curtain hanging before it — a very temple of flirtation; and endless lines of starry lights were burning in every direction, clustered round the handsome chandeliers, or projected in brilliant semicircles in front of the rich pier-glasses.

No one had yet arrived, and Mrs. Constable was in the drawing-room with the governess and the children, who in their dresses were as restlessly anxious as they might naturally be expected to have been under such circumstances. Clara, although pale and dispirited, looked most lovely. Her dress was simply of muslin, edged with narrow silver lace, and decorated with two or three small bouquets, all the work of her own hands; and her hair, in plain bands, was without an ornament of any kind except one white camellia, which had been sent to her anonymously that morning — an event which had called forth much animadversion from the mistress of the house, who expressed great surprise that Clara should wear it under such circumstances. But for once Clara was not hurt by her remarks; and kept the camellia, in spite of being talked at for half an hour.

Mrs. Constable's feelings as she gazed at Clara were quite undefinable. She was angry with her — certainly very angry — for being so pretty; but at the same time somewhat pleased to find one of her dependants looked so creditable. Perhaps, of the two emotions, the first was in the ascendant, for she presently said —

“You will oblige me by not dancing too often, Miss Scattergood; indeed, I would rather that you did not at all, at least whilst other ladies are sitting down. If you are asked, it will be sufficient for you to say that you are indisposed. Hark! there is an arrival.”

A loud knock was followed by the rustling of brocade, as some of the company were announced. As they entered

the room, that Clara might receive a lesson in knowing her position, Mrs. Constable, after the reception, said aloud,

"Miss Scattergood, I will trouble you to bring my fan down. I have left it on the table in my room."

As Mr. Constable was still upstairs, encasing himself in a dress after the pattern of the traditionary Roger Conestable in the library, the lady well knew Clara could not go into the room ; but she was sure that the hint would be salutary, and was also well-timed.

The company now began to arrive in rapid succession, and there was soon a line of carriages that reached entirely to the corner of Fitzroy Street. Mrs. Constable gazed with pride upon the really brilliant throng she had collected together, and watched with admiration—it was not love—the manner in which her children were being flattered and petted by her friends. Certainly the costumes had been chosen with great taste. There were few amongst them that were conventional : and when the band struck up, and showy trinkets sparkled, and plumes waved in the mazes of the dance, perhaps some of the lady's self-conceit might have been forgiven. Even Clara's passive face lost some of its sadness, and lighted up as she gazed upon the showy groups. But the next instant it was sad as before, for the moment's excitement had passed, and the bitter truth came back to her heart that she was "only the governess."

Dr. Herbert was amongst the latest arrivals. He brought a party with him, and Clara's pulse beat quicker—she scarcely knew why—as his own and his son's names were announced with those of one or two others, lost in the murmur of the crowd. The doctor was effectively dressed as a soldier of the Commonwealth, and Herbert wore a beautiful *moyen age* costume of the reign of Louis the Tenth ; a dark claret velvet tunic with scarlet hose, and pointed shoes. A very handsome girl in corresponding female attire was leaning on his arm ; and at this moment Clara thought she should have felt happier had he been quite alone. But as the young lady turned round, and Clara beheld her lovely but thoughtful face, an exclamation of surprise burst from her as she recognised Amy Grantham.

The crowd was so great round the door, where many of the "wall-flowers" had collected, as that race usually do—generally in the spot where they are most in the way—that Clara could not get near her friends. But in an instant the whole truth shot across her mind, and she wondered she had not thought of it before. Mrs. Grantham was Dr. Herbert's sister; and she recollected that a match had long been talked of between Amy and her cousin Herbert, at the time her family lived near Brentwood. The sensations of the last two minutes had been so rapid and unexpected that, in her present fragile state of health, they nearly overcame her, and she leant against a marble pedestal for support. But a quadrille commenced, and Mrs. Constable called her to look after the children, who were attitudinising about the room in every body's way. With some trouble she contrived to draw them aside—a display of authority which Neville resented by tearing off one or two of the bouquets on her dress. But this produced little annoyance; for during the quadrille her entire gaze and thoughts were centered on Herbert, whose graceful and manly figure gliding about the room threw all others in the shade.

"Who is that fine girl?" asked a guest, pointing to Amy.

"A Miss Grantham, I believe," returned another; "she comes out of Essex. I hear she is engaged to young Herbert—the gentleman she is dancing with."

"I suppose it is a good match for him?" said the first speaker.

"I think not," replied his friend. "Grantham's income has been reduced to nothing: but Herbert's expectations are first-rate. He is an excellent fellow, they tell me."

Poor Clara!

As the quadrille finished, Herbert and Amy came round in the promenade, and he stopped as he passed the recess wherein Clara was sitting, to speak to her, gently pressing her hand as he inquired kindly after her health.

"I see you have chosen a very nice camellia for your

toilet," he added, in a low but impressive voice, as he almost looked through Clara's eyes with his own.

Clara coloured slightly, but beyond this took no notice, evidently avoiding the subject by speaking to Amy, who was no less surprised than her friend had previously been, at this unexpected meeting. But she greeted her warmly, and expressed her satisfaction at seeing her with more than ordinary emphasis.

"You may be released from your thralldom, gallant coz," said Amy, smiling at Herbert. "Poor victim! you have been very good. But you can go now, for I mean to have a long, long chat with Miss Scattergood."

Herbert raised his plumed cap to both the ladies, as he plunged into the vortex of company, but his last glance rested upon Clara.

The two young girls were soon seated, side by side, in one of the recesses of the windows, half concealed by the curtains of muslin and yellow damask on each side. One might have looked long about the ball-room before two such fair creatures could have been placed together, as the visitor and the governess. A few hurried remarks passed between them, and when another dance commenced, they entered into a deep and earnest conversation.

The discourse was long and serious; and wound up together as they soon found their interests were, nothing on either side was concealed from the other. But not until this evening had Clara been clearly aware of the real extent to which the attachment between Amy and her brother had gone, having put down much of Vincent's hurried narrative in the hall to the excited state in which he then was. Yet, as she heard from the lips of the devoted girl the corroborating account of the fearful scenes through which they had lately passed — their meeting, the fire, and Vincent's escape — she almost felt a weight taken from her mind as it proved that no other feeling than friendship existed between Amy and young Herbert.

"He told me to write to you," said Clara, alluding to her brother, "but I have been very ill since then, and was

also afraid lest you should be from home. I had a letter from him yesterday."

"You know his address, then?" inquired Amy anxiously.

"This is it," replied Clara, producing the letter; "you can read it if you please — your name is mentioned in it more than once."

Amy took the letter, and hurriedly thrust it into the bosom of her dress, as Herbert advanced towards them.

"If you have quite finished this interesting discourse, Miss Scattergood," he said, "I shall be happy to dance with you. For *I* have also something to say."

Clara bowed, and rose to take his arm; and they were going to take their place in the quadrille, when Mrs. Constable crossed the room, and exclaimed,

"Miss Scattergood, Neville is very poorly — it must be the excitement. Bingham is engaged in the ice-room, so I will thank you to sit with him in the nursery for half an hour. I have been looking for you everywhere."

"You must not take Miss Scattergood away," said Herbert to the lady of the mansion. "She is engaged to me for this dance."

"I am very sorry," returned Mrs. Constable, certainly not looking so, "but the poor child is really quite ill. However, you will have no lack of partners, Mr. Herbert. I shall make you vain if I tell you the conquests you are making." And, dropping her voice, she said in a low tone, and only meant for his ear, "Besides, I think you may look higher than a governess."

Clara heard every syllable. She drew her arm away from her intended partner's, and passed through the doorway, outside of which Master Neville was standing, very fractious and unpleasant, having gone down with every refreshment party, and considerably indulged. But Herbert immediately followed her, and said hurriedly,

"Do not think so meanly of me. I shall keep a place for you at supper; and if you are not there, I shall come and fetch you. You are aware that I know the way."

And at the same time Clara felt a gentle pressure on her hand.

There were two or three couples seated on the stairs, for the rooms were very full, by whom the governess had to lead her charge. They barely made way for her, staring coldly at her as she passed, and then going on with their conversation. She looked back as she turned the landing, and observed that Herbert's eyes were still following her : and then for the next half hour she remained in the nursery with her troublesome pupil, listening to the sounds of revelry and music below.

CHAP. XX.

THE BALL SUPPER. CLARA SCARCELY KNOWS WHETHER TO
BE VERY GLAD OR VERY SORRY.

MASTER NEVILLE's complaint, which imprisoned the poor governess in the nursery, was a compound of ill-temper and indigestion ; and, having amused himself by venting his fractious spirit upon Clara for the space of three quadrilles, as could be reckoned by the sound of the band in the drawing-room, he insisted upon getting into bed with his clothes on, and went to sleep. At length the music ceased, and whilst Clara was wondering how long her imprisonment would continue, she heard light footsteps ascending the staircase, accompanied by a musical laugh, and then Amy Grantham came into the nursery, followed by Herbert.

"There !" said Amy, "your knight-errant has come to release you. I told him I did not know what Mrs. Constable would say if she heard of it. But he is terribly headstrong."

"Who would not dare anything for the society of two such *belles* ?" replied her cousin, bowing to each.

"Oh, my dear Herbert," said Amy, laughing, "don't pay me any compliments ; keep them all for Clara. I am sure we quite understand each other ; don't we, coz ?"

She extended her hand towards Herbert, smiling ; and

then, almost immediately a cloud passed over her face, and she sighed deeply.

"My goodness, Amy!" exclaimed Herbert, "you must be very far gone indeed, if that sigh shows the pressure upon the heart, like the safety-valves on the engines."

"I thought you came to take Clara down to supper?" replied Miss Grantham, wishing to turn the subject.

"Of course I did: and we must make haste, if we wish to get a seat. *Allons!* that waltz has finished."

And taking one on either arm, he descended with his fair companions to the drawing-room landing, where they were checked by the imposing train of costumes, which went crushing, rustling, and glittering down the staircase.

Very brilliant indeed did the supper-table look, with its long rows of twinkling lights, its burnished *epergnes*, and sparkling service of cut-glass, coruscating in all directions. And brighter still were the flashing eyes that lighted up about it: and pleasanter to gaze upon were the perfumed silky tresses that flung their odour around, mingling with those of the scented bouquets placed along the table, for which so many exotics had been despoiled. And there were waving plumes, and shining head-dresses in animated confusion, in every direction. There were peals of soft laughter, too, and sallies of delicate wit, and refined compliments: the circumstance of being in a fancy dress appeared to give greater licence to the wearers to indulge in mirth-creating retorts or allusions. And then came the sharp reports of the fringed and sugared artillery that guarded the *pâtisserie*; and the joyous explosion of champagne bottles, as the corks leapt forth from their prison-fetters, followed by the creaming wine, whose transient bewilderment made the laughter more loudly musical, the compliment more daring, and the rejoinder more piquant.

A glorious thing at an evening-party is champagne: though it does not behove you to speak about it afterwards with rapture, lest others should imagine it was not a wonted beverage at the *réunions* you are accustomed to attend.

But still, it is a wondrous production to be obtained from such a modest berry as a grape. Science shows us that subtle gases may be compressed until their atoms are driven into a liquid form ; we look upon champagne as the fluid condensed from the vivifying and ethereal essences, which in their free state combine to produce wit, joy, and flirtation. Champagne knows its power, and even appears proud of it. It is impatient of restraint from wire and foil : it rushes into the glass as if it had an idea that every fairy bubble rising to its surface contained an epigram or pointed allusion : it leaps to the red lips of women, as though it loved to kiss them in its very gallantry. And the red lips, as far as the champagne is concerned, never object to return the compliment.

In the general crush for places, seats at the table were somewhat at a premium. But even this, in some cases, added enjoyment to the repast ; for many snug parties were formed in out-of-the-way situations,—at side-boards, and tray-stands, and window-seats ; at which, though there was not quite so much noise as at the long tables, perhaps a great deal more was going on. For it was there that voices spake low, and eyes looked a great deal more than the tongue either dared, or was able, to express. It was here that the pointed shoe of the middle ages came so closely to the tiny satin slipper of modern times ; so much so, indeed, that at times it quite touched it, whilst a tremulous vibration ran through the dress from beneath whose border it peeped forth.

Amy, Clara, and Herbert were too late to find places with the majority ; and they had taken their seats at a small side-table, from which the latter had ruthlessly cleared an array of plate and glass, to make room for them. And when they were settled, it was indeed well that Amy understood her cousin, as she had affirmed ; had it been otherwise, she would have been very jealous. For he seemed at one time to think that there was nobody but Clara in the room, until Amy told him that when he was quite disengaged she should be glad of a little wine ; and even then, after begging her pardon, he relapsed into his

attentions again, talking to her so earnestly that Amy could not find it in her heart to disturb him any more. So she quietly and good-temperedly looked after herself ; although there were many cavaliers in the room who would have been proud and happy to have become her attendant.

At last the ladies rose to depart. Hurried words of temporary farewell were spoken, and small taper hands were detained in mailed gloves, certainly much longer than there was any occasion for, whilst the fact that it was to be "the very first quadrille after supper" was again and again impressed upon their fair owners. And then the gentlemen collected round the principal tables, and balanced the anti-romantic manner in which they attacked the viands by the chivalrous way in which they toasted the ladies. After this they drank Mr. Constable's health, who returned thanks, and pointing to the portrait of Roger Constable, sometime steward of Chiltern, and latterly of Wardour Street, trusted he might ever sustain the honour of that line ; which line, as far as he knew anything about it, could only have been the red one by which the picture was suspended.

Herbert was one of the first to slip away from the table, and rejoin the fair occupants of the ball-rooms. The usual long post-cœnal waltz was going on when he entered the room ; but Clara had not joined it, and the cavalier immediately went and seated himself by her, in spite of the strenuous exertions and angry looks of Mrs. Constable to prevent it. And then, after a little conversation, it appeared to strike them that the rooms were very warm, and they were very much in the way, for the reckless waltzers would keep rushing against them.

"I think it will be more pleasant in the conservatory," said Herbert. "Shall we go there ?"

Clara timidly assented, fearful of Mrs. Constable's wrath at such a rash proceeding for a governess. But the mistress of the house was just wishing two old ladies good-night, who were expressing their unbounded gratification at the evening they had spent, and fortunately did not observe her. She therefore accompanied Herbert to the conservatory, where they found Amy talking to a young gen-

tleman of the last century, in a waistcoat like a volcano, and a cravat like a cataract. As she saw the others enter, Amy rose to depart, looking significantly at her cousin, and apparently glad to break off her own conversation. And then Herbert and Clara remained alone.

They were both silent for some few minutes after Amy Grantham left. Herbert was evidently embarrassed; and Clara was opening and closing her fan, and drawing the fibres of its plumed edge through her fingers, as if a fan was a most difficult thing to arrange to one's satisfaction. At last she spoke.

"I am really afraid I shall get into disgrace, Mr. Herbert, if we are here much longer," she said. "Mrs. Constable is so very particular with me, and I dare not offend her."

"What right has she to assume any control over your actions?" asked Herbert.

"You know my situation in this house — the governess, — I believe under the lowest servant; in utter dependence upon whatever she may choose to order," replied Clara, as her eyes glistened. "I know she would think you demeaned yourself in talking to me."

"Do you believe *me* guilty of harbouring the same thoughts?" asked Herbert, in a low emphatic voice.

"Oh, no," answered his fair companion; "you have always evinced the contrary. I have much — very much to thank you for; more than I can ever repay but with my assurances of gratitude."

"You have more than that to give me if you choose," continued Herbert, in the same tone.

"And what is that?" asked Clara, all trembling with emotion.

"Your hand — your heart — your love!" exclaimed Herbert as he seized her hand, half dropping upon his knee from the low *causeuse* on which they were seated. "And may I hope? Only tell me that you do not actually dislike me, — that I may try and gain your esteem. Clara — answer me."

"Mr. Herbert, this is unkind. — it is cruel of you,"

returned the governess ; “ you are compromising me : you are indeed. Some of the company will be here immediately, and then — think to what you will expose me.”

“ I do not care, if the whole world come,” replied Herbert, hurriedly. Nor, indeed, did he at the moment : at such periods we seldom do. If ever selfishness be excusable, it is during a similar access of temporary delirium. Had he not been indifferent to any thing else, he would have seen the curtain at the doorway slightly moved. “ Clara ” he continued most earnestly, “ pray answer me. May I presume — or are your affections otherwise engaged ? If so, you shall see that I know how to respect them.”

Clara made no reply, but burst into tears, entirely overcome by her emotion. And yet she did not withdraw her hand. There was a pause, equally painful and harassing to either party, and then she spoke in a broken voice.

“ I should be but ill repaying your kindness if I did not answer you in the same spirit of candour you have always evinced towards me. I told you how sensible I was of all your goodness ; can you not understand how closely a woman’s gratitude borders on another feeling ? But you do not know all, or you would pity me, and not urge this suit, which cannot but end in sorrow to both of us.”

“ I know everything,” he answered. “ There is scarcely a circumstance connected with you and your family that my father or Amy Grantham has not put me in possession of. All I have heard only raises you still higher in my esteem. Will you allow me to hope ? ”

Clara turned her head away ; but Herbert felt a slight — very slight pressure upon his hand from the taper fingers he held within his own. It was sufficient, though, to inform him that his addresses were accepted ; and he was about to pour forth his gratitude to his trembling and weeping companion, when the rich curtain that shrouded the entrance was thrown on one side, and Mrs. Constable, in all the pride of her Queen Elizabeth’s dress, and all the passion of the character she represented, stood in the doorway, leading Blanche by the hand.

“ I am sorry to disturb you, Mr. Herbert,” she exclaimed,

in a terrible calm of anger ; but your father has been inquiring after you some time. I should not have known where you were had not Blanche peeped in by chance and seen you thus, no doubt pleasantly, engaged."

Herbert stammered out a few words, but was so taken by surprise that he broke down in his attempt to speak. And all the colour which his proposal had called up to Clara's cheeks had left them : she remained, pale and frightened, on the *causeuse*.

" May I conduct you back to the ball-room, Miss Scattergood ? " he said at last, offering his arm to Clara.

" Excuse me," replied Mrs. Constable, seizing Clara's arm. " I wish to speak to the governess for an instant. Perhaps you will be kind enough to take care of my little girl ? "

There was no resource left but to comply ; so, with one long, meaning glance at Clara, Herbert took the child, and went back to the drawing-room.

" I thank you," said Mrs. Constable, "almost choking with anger as he left, — " I thank you, Miss Scattergood, for this unparalleled display of impudence in my house, and with my guest, — before my child, too, whose morals I believe you are supposed to direct ! "

She uttered the last few words with a bitter sneer. It was the child — one of those "sharp little things," — who had peeped into the conservatory during the conversation between Clara and Herbert.

The poor girl scarcely knew what reply to make. The events of the last quarter of an hour had been sufficient to confuse her, without this interruption. She was about to stammer forth a few flurried words, when Mrs. Constable continued : —

" I do not wish for any explanation, as I shall not require your services any longer than the time of notice mentioned in our agreement : you are quite at liberty to look out for another situation. At present you will oblige me by retiring to your room."

If ever Clara's sweet temper felt inclined to rebel, it was at present. But prudence conquered ; as any resistance on

her part to Mrs. Constable's orders would have led to a scene. She, therefore, went at once to her chamber, casting a hurried glance at the ball-room as she passed. Herbert was not in sight, and she stole up stairs, scarcely knowing whether to cry or be happy at the events of the evening, for her brain was in a perfect whirl.

CHAP. XXI.

THE DAWN OF BETTER TIMES APPEARS TO BE COMING ON.

IN a very little time after the interview between Mrs. Constable and her governess mentioned in the last chapter, Clara left her situation, by mutual agreement. For Herbert called so constantly, in spite of all the black looks of the lady of the house ; and the children, encouraged by the example of their mamma, became so completely tyrannical in their nursery behaviour, and perfectly heedless of whatever they were told to do, that a change of instructresses appeared the only plan to be pursued. And so, after enduring rudeness from everybody all over the house, except Bingham, she returned home. The extreme plush could not condescend to go and call a cab, so the nursery-maid went by herself, when she had taken Clara's boxes down into the hall ; after which she was obliged to return to the children. Mrs. Constable called Clara into the drawing-room before she went, and paid her exactly so much of her salary as was due, even down to some fractional *halfpence* screwed up in a bit of a concert programme — which sum she had discovered by the “Ready Reckoner” was the proper proportion for some odd days,—and coldly wished her good-bye, trusting she would get on better in her next place, and expressing her sorrow that they had not suited each other. And then as the bell was rung, the extreme plush was obliged to open the street-door, but he did not further degrade himself by touching the parcels of the governess. On the contrary, he allowed

Clara and the cabman to carry them all out between them, even to the wonderful box covered with canvas, which would not go inside or behind, and could not be put on the top, so that it was finally placed upon the box, all of which it occupied, giving rise to curious speculations in thinking minds as to the ultimate situation of the driver. When the extreme plush saw Clara carry the last package out, he said "Good-bye, my dear!" in a most familiar manner, and then banged the door to immediately, so close upon her that it almost caught her dress, long before she moved away from the house, or had even got into the cab. But Clara was going home, and had a great deal to tell them about, and think of herself; and there would be no children to torment her, — for some little time, at least; so that she did not think anything of all these disagreeables.

And how cheerful did home appear, even though it was but in a lodging-house! Mrs. Chicksand and Lisbeth, who knew Clara was coming back, had been the whole morning performing feats of dexterity with hammers and bed-winches, as well as despoiling Mr. Bodle's room of various articles of furniture, to fit up her old chamber as heretofore. For Mr. Bodle was still in arrear, and, therefore, considerable liberties were taken with his *ameublemens* and personal comforts, whenever it was found necessary to do so.

Things were certainly looking brighter with the Scatergood family. The old gentleman had, by the interest of some good connexions, got an appointment in some government office, that nobody had ever before heard of: and his principal duties consisted in untying dusty papers one day, and tying them up again the next, as well as being paid to read the *Times* and *Post* all through every morning, between ten and three, and give his opinion thereon to the clerks. And the clerks themselves were not overworked. They made pens, and scratched out mistakes in letters with a thing like a steel ace of spades; or carried home quires of foolscap, and bundles of quills, in the pockets of their Chesterfields "to work at home with."

Freddy was not at home. He had been prevailed upon,

after a terrible struggle, to return to Merchant Tailors', but not to Mr. Snap's. For, after all, he did not dislike the school so much as the bullying where he boarded; and therefore he was placed where he was more comfortable and better looked after, which much alleviated the horrors he had associated with the institution. The house was in a retired city square, to arrive at which by its intricate lanes and passages, a course of six lessons in the Hampton Court Maze might have been prescribed with advantage. But it was not dull and dreary, like his former abode, for all that. There was a large office opposite, where a great newspaper was printed; and the bustle and clatter connected with this establishment kept them alive all day, and even all night, as far as that goes. For then the engine began to shout and travail in the throes of labour, producing the thousand sheets which were to have such mighty influence over all the earth: and expresses clattered into the square, and others left it without ceasing, until day came again. And although this disturbed the neighbours for a time, yet they soon got used to it; and Freddy began to regard the engine-press as a homely companion, and was even dull and wakeful on Saturday nights, when it rested itself for the week, with whatever conscience it best might, according to its proceedings of the previous six days.

Herbert was constant in his visits, now that Clara had left the Constables, and was very soon received as a recognised lover. And very attentive indeed he was, not only to her, but to everybody. He brought the old gentleman yesterday's *Examiner* every Monday morning, and sent Clara fresh flowers for her table, and used to go and visit Freddy, and treat him to tarts until he could hardly see for repletion; and never left Mrs. Chicksand's in the evening but he gave Lisbeth a shilling, which also produced a very favourable impression in that quarter. Besides this, he took half a dozen reserved seats at a concert Mr. Bodle was about to give; and altogether conducted himself with so much liberality to everybody, that he became a general favourite. Indeed, they were all happier than they had been for a long, long time. As Mr. Scattergood had often

remarked, it was a very long lane that had got no turning ; and now they appeared to be arriving at that particular point. Yet through it all they thought a great deal about Vincent, and used to wish that he was amongst them. Clara had letters from him very frequently, from different resting-places upon Mr. Rosset's "circuit." Perhaps there was always more about Amy Grantham than there was about home ; but Clara was not vexed at this, and usually took care to answer the letter in the same spirit. But there were also earnest entreaties from all that he would return home, and as often were they replied to by his alluding to the persecutions which he was sure Mr. Grantham would subject him to, now that his attachment to Amy was not concealed. And this was done also in consideration to his family ; for, with all his recklessness and loose life, into which circumstances had led him, Vincent had a good heart. The worst regulated in the eyes of the world, have not always the worst natures.

Clara used to ponder a long time over what was the best course to be pursued, and at last determined that she would go herself to Mr. Grantham, and endeavour to plead her brother's cause. Under other circumstances, her parents might possibly have objected ; but they were anxious that the family should be once more reunited, and had the greatest confidence in her good sense. And she also determined upon visiting her uncle Gregory on the way, to thank him personally for what he had sent her, calculating upon a share of Amy's bed at Brabants', which had been rendered again habitable. She insisted, moreover, upon going alone, although Herbert would have given his little finger to have escorted her. But this she would not permit, for Clara was proud of her own self-reliance ; but she gave him to understand, with a very wicked smile, that she could not help meeting him at Brabants, or even speaking civilly to him, if he happened to be there.

She started by an early Gravesend boat the following morning. The excitement of the mission had put her in good spirits, and she thought that the river breeze never came so cool and fresh upon her cheeks, — that the Thames

never sparkled and scintillated so vividly as it did in the bright sunlight. There was music on board, too, — not of a very high order, to be sure, but still it was lively and joyous ; and everybody looked pleasant and contented, from the old gentleman who was catching all the air he could at the end of the boat, to the young “gent” in severe summer costume, who put himself into imposing attitudes before Clara, and tapping his glazed boot with the end of a two-foot cane, thought he was creating a very great sensation, to which the cigar no doubt contributed. But we question if Clara ever observed him, much less if he occupied a place in her thoughts for a single instant.

At last the packet came up to the Terrace Pier, and Clara landed without assistance, and in spite of the offered hand of the aforesaid individual ; and then she proceeded through a region of shrimps and tea-things to Chamouny Cottage, presumed to have been so named by the original architect, from its Alpine situation. It was a long time since she had seen her uncle Gregory ; but he had always been very kind to her — more so, indeed, than to any of the family. So Clara was not very nervous about the interview ; and, being aware of all his peculiarities, there was nothing to surprise her.

The mountebank boy, who had so delighted Mr. Jollit and frightened Mr. Snarry when they paid their visit, received Clara in the same curious fashion, and inducted her to the room where Mr. Gregory Scattergood was seated, in his accustomed chair. The old gentleman was somewhat astonished at first to see a young lady ; but he soon recognised her, and spoke very kindly.

“What, my little Clara ! — eh ? quite a woman, and so and so. What brings you here ? I thought all your family had forgotten me long ago.”

“Indeed, uncle, they have not,” replied Clara. “It was to thank you from them for your late kindness to us, that I came. Mamma is sorry that we have not yet been able to repay it, but we hope to do so soon.”

“Ah ! that’s my brother’s idea, I’m sure,” said the old

gentleman ; " he was always going to do everything soon, only he never did."

Poor Clara felt it was so exactly her father's character that she could not deny it. She replied,

" I hoped to have paid you myself, uncle, if I had remained longer in my situation ; but I am now at home again."

" And how comes that, Clara ? " asked Mr. Scattergood somewhat gravely.

" I don't know, I'm sure. We did not agree very well, I believe — Mrs. Constable and myself. I was very unhappy — very."

The tears came into poor Clara's eyes at the very reminiscences of her misery.

" And where's Vincent ? " asked the old man ; " vagabondising, and so and so ? "

" He is in the country, I believe, uncle. It is a long time since they have seen him at home."

" The less they see of him the better," said Mr. Scattergood. " A sad graceless fellow — would turn any family topsy-turvy. Ugh ! I wish he'd do so to me, though."

This was the first touch of the old gentleman's monomania that Clara had perceived ; and knowing that he would become excited if the subject were not changed, she continued hastily,

" Indeed you are mistaken, sir. I am sure if he had only the chance of doing something for himself, he would work very hard." And then, after a minute's pause, she added, " Will you come and see us, uncle ? At all events, will you come and see *me* ? "

" What should I come and see you for ? " said the old gentleman in rather a testy tone. " You only want me for what you can get, and so and so."

" If that had been the case, we should have asked you when we really were in want," replied Clara, colouring. " Not when things are looking so much better with us."

Clara was very sly not to say anything about her own prospects.

" You will come, I know, uncle — will you not ? " she

continued, in coaxing tones, as she leant upon the arm of his chair, and placed her arm about the old gentleman's neck.

"You're a very dangerous little girl, Clara," replied Mr. Scattergood. But he did not say "No."

Clara saw that she had pretty well gained one great point, and so she did not care to press it further; but with proper tact turned the subject. Her uncle insisted upon her stopping for some refreshment; and during all this time her gentle manners and goodness so won upon the old man, that when she left he kissed her, and pressed a small parcel into her hand, which he had been preparing quietly under the table, like a conjuror making ready some great trick. And then she wished him good-bye, not saying anything about her intended journey to Brabants, but getting a promise before she left that her uncle would soon come and see them.

She kept the little parcel tightly grasped in her hand, until she had got clear of the house, and then looked at it, when she found that it contained five bright new sovereigns. This made Clara very happy; but not so much for the sake of the money, as because it showed her uncle was well disposed towards her; and she tripped lightly along the street, causing many a Gravesend "man-about-the-town-pier" to look back after her.

At the corner of one of the thoroughfares she encountered a joyous party of ladies and gentlemen; and one of the latter having looked at her for an instant, made one or two convulsive bows, accompanied by a sentimental start, as he then passed on with a lady on his arm. Clara knew the face, but did not recollect until a few minutes afterwards that it was her old admirer, Mr. Snarry. The next boat to town was snorting at the pier, and the bell was ringing as she once more embarked, to be put out at Gray's Thurrock, on her way to Brabants.

It did not take a very long time to reach her destination; for she hired a conveyance in the village, and proceeded at once, gratified at her own independence, and deeming the five sovereigns an exhaustless sum, for she had never before had so much money entirely at

her command. Had there been an estate to sell, the purchase of it would have seemed perfectly within her grasp. As it was, she had already laid out the money a hundred times over, in presents for everybody, and especially a remittance for Vincent.

She followed the same road that her brother had taken some time before, and reached Brabants early in the afternoon. There were still traces of the conflagration about the house ; but the greater portion of the wing destroyed had been cleared away, and the rest put in tolerable repair. Every object came back as fresh to Clara as though it had only been yesterday when she saw it last, and she regarded everything with the deepest interest, not unmixed, however, with some anxiety as to the termination of her mission.

She saw Amy and Herbert strolling about the grounds as she neared the house, and when the little vehicle stopped, they came to meet her. Mr. Grantham had gone over to Brentwood upon some county business ; but Clara was delighted to hear that Herbert had in some degree prepared him for Clara's visit. Be sure too that Amy, for many reasons, had done what she could — quietly, gently, and without going too far ; for although her father was tenderly attached to her, yet this was a subject upon which, since the dreary night of the fire, she had not dared to speak to him. However, Clara was glad to hear that she was likely to be kindly received. And then Amy suddenly found that she had something to see to in the house, which she had quite forgotten, and entered forthwith, leaving Herbert and Clara to linger about the pleasant avenues and terraces of the garden.

At length Mr. Grantham returned. He greeted Clara far more cordially than she had anticipated ; but she was still flurried and trembling, as she accompanied him anxiously into the room wherein we first introduced him to the reader. Neither of the others went with her, but she could see them walking about the lawn in close conversation, and ever and anon glancing towards the window.

"I believe I am not altogether unacquainted with the

motives that have brought you here, Miss Scattergood," said Mr. Grantham, speaking first, to Clara's great relief "You came respecting your brother."

Clara replied in a tremulous affirmative.

"Have you any notion of his present location?" asked Mr. Grantham.

"He was at Coventry when he last wrote," answered Clara; "but I have not seen him since—since that terrible night when he met you."

"You heard of that affair, then?"

"He has told me all, sir, in his letters," continued Clara. "I believe he would have been with us at home at this present time, but the fear of your resentment has kept him wandering about the country. As you say, you may have heard the reason of this visit; it was to implore you to forget what is past, and pardon him."

"He deserves little commiseration from any one," observed Mr. Grantham.

"He is my brother, sir," exclaimed Clara.

And then, after a momentary pause, she added:

"Possibly I understand him better than any one else in the world. I will admit all his faults: that he is idle, improvident — reckless, if you will — that he has thrown away numberless chances that might have benefited both himself and our family. But I know with it all that he has a good heart, and he has kept it so through everything."

Clara spoke warmly, and the colour heightened in her cheeks as she addressed Mr. Grantham. He regarded her with attention, and then asked,

"And what would you have me do?"

Had Clara spoken what was uppermost in her thoughts, she would have asked the master of Brabants to have received him there, and allowed him to pay his addresses to Amy. But this would have, at once, frustrated everything. She merely rejoined:

"Let him come back to us again, without fear of your anger pursuing him. They do not know everything at home; if they did, it would break my mother's heart."

"I will persecute him no further," said Mr. Grantham.

"He may return whenever he likes — I hope to settle in some respectable position. It would rejoice no one more than myself to see him so placed."

"Oh! thank you." This was all the answer Clara made; but if ever she threw her whole heart into three words, it was now.

Mr. Grantham, perhaps fearful of being led into further concessions, now broke up the interview. He rose, and bowed to Clara, as she flew back to the lawn, and rapidly revealed the termination of the interview to Herbert and Amy. To all it was most satisfactory; and much as Herbert had admired Clara before, he loved her still more dearly for the good feeling she had, alone, established that very day.

It was a happy meeting at Brabants; more so perhaps than any that had been passed there for a long time. Mr. Grantham took it into his head to retire early; and the three young people sat up, talking and arranging plans to an hour beyond the memory of the oldest servant. And Amy had never been so musically inclined. She remained at her piano nearly the whole evening, drowning the low tones of Herbert and Clara with her own sweet voice, until they separated for the night.

And then, long after everybody had been wrapt in their first sleep, the voices of the two girls might be heard in Amy's chamber, still in conversation, until the first chirp of the earliest bird resounded, and the first grey of morning stole over the leafy coverts that stretched far and wide round Brabants.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAP. I.

THE INGENIOUS MR. JOLLIT SEES EVERYTHING GO OFF TO HIS
SATISFACTION.

ROSEHERVILLE, which may be considered a species of paradise between a chalk-pit and a zoological garden, is a locality of considerable interest to Gravesend emigrants, combining the magnificence of a regal *parterre* with the advantages of a shilling ordinary, and collateral attractions of various kinds, which only are discovered upon residing at the adjoining popular watering-place.

The day fixed for the fancy fair, whereby the "Provident Crickets" were to derive such benefit, at length arrived; and Mr. Jollit had never before appeared so perfectly in his glory, as on that morning before the gates were thrown open, when, assisted by the committee, who each carried a little rosette at the button-hole, like the ornament of a bridle headpiece, he marshalled the ladies to their different stalls. Mrs. Hankins's sister probably had the choicest display of wares through the management of Mr. Snarry, who was going backwards and forwards all the morning to the different lodgings of the contributors in one of the Parrock-Street vehicles, familiarly called "shatter-go-dans," a species of carriage which might be discussed with interest at the Antiquarian Society's meetings, as to whether it was ever new, and if so, during what period of early history, and what was the state of the arts and sciences in England at the time.

Be sure the other fair young ladies — especially when they were fair and young — had also attendants, in gloves

and stocks of a brilliancy known only to light comedians, and those who go down to the waters in shilling steamers for festivity. And besides the quadrille music proper to Rosherville, there were two bands stationed about the gardens; one next the bows and arrows, and the other half way up the hill leading to the tower. Mr. Jollit had provided them, having picked them both up in London, a few evenings before, misplaying popular airs in front of houses of popular resort and refreshment; and he had clothed them in beefeaters' dresses, also obtained from the masquerade warehouse, which gave them a very imposing appearance.

The last arrival, before the gates were opened, was that of Mr. Rasselas Fipps, the troubadour, who came in a close fly, guitar and all, in a state of great fear and trembling, and escorted by a troop of boys on either side, and some riding behind, who had accompanied and huzzaed him all the way from his lodgings. He was received by Mr. Jollit, and then presented successively to all the ladies as the "Rosherville Minstrel," which made him blush more than ever; for although Mr. Fipps's temperament was poetical, and as such beloved by the fair sex, yet in his gentle nature he preferred, and felt easier in their society, in his own clothes, on donkeys, at the melting time of twilight, than he did in green tights and feathers, beneath the flaunting, garish eye of noon.

"Well, Rasselas, how do you feel?" asked the pleasant Jollit, as he paced the greensward with his friend. "I hope you're not uncomfortable."

"Oh, not at all, not at all," replied Mr. Fipps with the pseudo-careless air of an individual who tumbles down and hurts himself in a great thoroughfare, before many people, always getting up smiling, as though it were rather a joyous proceeding than otherwise.

"That's all right," said Jollit. "Now turn round and let me look at you. The dress fits you capitally."

"Yes," replied Mr. Fipps dubiously; "it is rather small, though. I don't think I could stoop in it."

And his appearance bore out his words; being some-

what as tight as the soldier-dolls who stand up amongst the basket of shaving soap in the Lowther Arcade.

"Well, never mind," returned Mr. Jollit, "it sets your figure off. Now go and sit in that arbour; and when you see company coming that way, start out before them, and sing something touching and soft—one or two if you like."

"Will Moore be too gallant?" asked Rasselas.

"More the merrier," replied Jollit, walking off.

"No—Moore, the poet, I mean. He won't be too—dear, I don't know how to express it—too warm, will he?"

"With the chill off! Oh no, not at all," said Jollit, as he marched off to see something else; and Mr. Fipps retired to his summer-house, practising "Lovely Night," in which he was not quite perfect, but which he had rehearsed the evening before over and over again, until the other lodger formed a different opinion of the period in question.

"Mr. Jollit," said a soft voice, as that gentleman crossed the lawn. It belonged to Mrs. Hankins's sister.

"My love?" returned that gentleman in the most winning tones. He had a familiar manner, which sometimes bordered on affection, especially towards Mrs. Hankins's sister. But Mr. Snarry, who was standing by, knew his friend, and was not jealous.

"What must we charge for these Berlin kettle-holders?" asked the young lady.

"How much do they sell in the shops for?" was the question in reply.

"About eighteen-pence at the Soho Bazaar, I should think."

"Oh! make them half a sovereign, then," said Mr. Jollit; "and if it is a gentleman, and he is inclined to flirt, double it. Now, Snarry, here, I'm sure would give five pounds if you looked at him as you do now."

Mr. Snarry blushed; and Mrs. Hankins's sister said, "Oh! Mr. Jollit, now: you do say such very strange things!" And then that light-hearted gentleman passed on to another part of the gardens.

"I say, Jollit," said Mr. Bam, who appeared to have

been mixing salad and slicing cucumbers ever since day-break in the banqueting-hall, "I've got some news just this minute from my brother."

"Let us have it, then."

"Well, then, we have got an old aunt that's rather religious."

"Oh!" replied Jollit; "she's not coming, is she?"

"No: but something else is. She keeps a Sunday-school out of her own pocket, and be——"

"Hush!" interrupted the funny gentleman: "I know what you are going to say."

"I have persuaded her," continued Mr. Bam, "to let the scholars have an excursion to the Nore to-day. Now, don't you see, we shall have some children after all to walk about the grounds, and excite much admiration from the company?"

"I see," replied Mr. Jollit; "capital! Are they to know where they are?"

"Not in the least," said Mr. Bam; "they don't know the Nore from Nova Scotia. I shall tell them that summer-house is the Nore: it will do very well. Taste this dressing — it is first-rate," continued Mr. Bam, presenting some in a table-spoon to Mr. Jollit.

"No, thank you, I had rather not; I will take your word," returned that gentleman. "Salad-dressing by itself is not a lively refreshment."

"Excellent!" continued Mr. Bam, in admiration, shaking the peculiar bottle that contained it. "It could not be better if it was 'incorporated by Act of Parliament.'"

Which being intended as a dim joke, the two gentlemen dug each other in the ribs, laughed, called each other wags, and then Mr. Jollit, assuming a more serious demeanour, observed, "I say, poor Snarry is hit very hard with Mrs. Hankins's sister. I'm afraid it's a case."

"Ah! um! yes," returned Mr. Bam, slicing red hearts from a beet-root cut for that purpose; "love is quite a popular delusion. Were you ever in love, Jollit?"

"Not that I know of," replied his friend; at least never

beyond the morning after a party, with some girl I had met the night before. My heart's very like a pop-gun, every shot that comes in drives the other out before it. I say Bam——"

"Well."

"When the fair is over, keep your eye upon the interesting couple. I will show you some fun before the day's over."

Mr. Bam promised compliance : and Mr. Jollit withdrew to look after the arrangements, for the company were now arriving very fast.

Very gay the gardens looked too, with the groups promenading about over the fresh greensward, dotting the leafy precipices with their lightly-tinted dresses, and moving along the top of the heights or sitting on the edges of them, and gazing on the fair prospect of foliage, river, and distant headlands before them. Some were in the arbours — but these were only in pairs — remaining incredibly long spaces of time without any other amusement than that of talking to one another : others were in the maze, and it was remarkable what pains the young ladies took, after some intelligent cavalier had inducted them to the centre, to take every way of getting out again but the right one ; and then the trellised barriers resounded with light silvery laughter, and little coquettish bonnets could be seen along the top of them, flirting with gallant-looking hats, or skimming away before them.

Mr. Joe Jollit was everywhere at once ; now leading off a round of applause to Mr. Fipps, who by dint of violent beverages was at last excited to commence his minstrelsy ; and anon going to the various stalls, admiring the goods audibly if he saw many people standing round them, and buying sovereign purses, worsted halfpence jugs, and sticking-plaster cases at immense prices, — with a quiet understanding, however, that they were to be returned as soon as the other customers had departed. Mr. Snarry kept close to the stall of Mr. Hankins's sister the whole day, looking all sorts of cutting instruments and edged tools at the gentlemen who lingered over her wares, paying

compliments. And Mr. Bam's client, the lady high in rank, was continually asking all the fair retailers whether they had sold any of the "Rainbow of Reality," walking about the grounds in all the pride of a *conversazione* authoress, and instructing her "companion," who was not remarkable for beauty, and consequently in no danger of philandering, to be perpetually reading a copy of the charming little work, and with great apparent interest, under a parasol upon a mechanical camp stool.

Mr. Bam's autographs went off wonderfully well, more especially those of Shakspeare, which name he spelt all sorts of ways to suit the taste of the purchasers ; and there was also a little ode, purporting to be written by Linnæus, and translated by the Rev. Gilbert White, omitted in his Natural History of Shelbourne, which being addressed to a cricket, was remarkably appropriate to the day ; and was intended also to have been sung by the children, but the hard names confused them. This was it :

IN GRYLLUM (TO A CRICKET).

Who is 't, when frosts begin to chill us,
With chirping, mirthful notes doth thrill us
Around the fire ? — domestic *Gryllus*,
My cricket !

Whose voice of warmth and life the test is,
As musical as that of *Vestris*,
Thee, and thy brother, term'd *campestris* ?
My cricket !

Who sleep'st near ovens all the day,
But on thy wings at night dost play,
Of order term'd *Neuroptera*,
My cricket

Whom all have heard, but never saw ;
Thou dost thy chirp from friction draw,
And not, as some think, from thy jaw,
My cricket !

Whose *tibiæ* are very strong,
Elytra cross'd by nerves, a throng :
With labial *palpi* not too long,
My cricket !

Tarlton's note also fetched a high price ; as well as an unedited joke of that person, who appears only to have equalled Joe Miller in dismal fun. It was as follows :

How Carlton fell out with a gallerie fellowe.

Carlton, playing at the Bull, in Bishop his Gate, by reason of many people and much disporte, a wag halter boy did cry: "Throw him ober." "Mary, boy," saies Carlton, "thou hast a quick wit." "Ay," saies the boy, "which can catch anything." "Then, God a mercy, boy, you'll catch it," saies Carlton, throwing a pippin which hit him sorelie. And eber after it was a by-word thorow Bishop his Gate, "You'll catch it," and is to this day.

The day went on pleasantly enough for everybody; and at last the fair concluded, to the great increase of the funds, and then the pretty stall-keepers left the tents, and wandered about the grounds with their *attachés*, as well as the rest of the company. Many delightful things were whispered and heard in the ruddy twilight; eyes grew more eloquent as the sun declined, and hearts softened, in company with the outlines of surrounding objects. And then the bands struck up for the dance, and twinkling lights, like many-coloured glowworms, dotted the flower-beds, or coruscated on the stars and balloons of the banqueting-hall, to the admiration of the beholders. There was also a concert, and it would have done the heart good of any extant master of ceremonies to have seen Mr. Jollit lead the *prima donna* into the music-gallery to sing, and lead her off again when she had finished. And the *prima donna* herself was a beautiful young lady in real feathers, who wore one side of her shawl over her shoulders, and the other under her waist, and who, when she sang a song expressive of her positive wish to enter into the matrimonial state, provided she could only find some eligible gallant whose attributes harmonized with her own mental idiosyncrasy, she threw such glances at the gentlemen below, that it was a wonder they did not all make an offer at once.

So passed the time until it was perfectly dark, when the fireworks were announced, and the company once more assembled on the lawn. The fireworks themselves had been exposed to view all day. They were wonderfully

mysterious-looking things, very like magnified ornaments on French tombstones; and, from the facility offered by the quickmatches, Mr. Jollit would have lighted them long before their time with a cigar, if it had not been his own fête. But he did not wish to play practical jokes upon himself, and so he left their combustion to the proper men. First of all a rocket went up, and drew the people's gaze after it, who indulged in the groans of admiration proper to be observed upon such occasions. Then wheels went off, first one way and then another, slow at first, and then fast; and things changed, and turned, and banged, and the usual routine of pyrotechnicism was observed, until Mr. Joe Jollit, after communing with Mr. Bam, came forward during a temporary cessation of brilliancies, and made a speech as follows:—

“Ladies and gentlemen,—I have a firework now to offer to your notice of most original beauty; for never has anything been seen like it before. It is called the ‘*bouquet d’amour*,’ and its exhibition will conclude the day’s festivities. The committee of the society in aid of whose funds the fête has taken place, desire me to return you their best thanks.”

Applause followed Mr. Jollit’s speech, who retired; and then expectation was on tiptoe. The firework commenced; it was an ordinary one for a little time, until it went off into a circle of port-fires, encircling the word “Farewell.” And then a sparkling light was seen hovering at the extremity of the lawn, which immediately burst out into a glare of Bengal fire of dazzling brilliancy, shedding a light equal to that of day—perhaps beyond it—upon the surrounding scenery. It was placed in front of a summer-house, behind which Mr. Jollit and Mr. Bam were seen rapidly making a retreat; but in the interior, which was illuminated with an intensity equalling that of oxyhydrogen, the astonished spectators beheld Mr. Snarry at the feet of Mrs. Hankins’s sister, and apparently offering up the warmest protestations of love; whilst at a small distance, seated on a tea-table, Mr. Rasselas Fipps was singing soft melodies to his guitar, being in Mr. Snarry’s confidence,

and having been requested to do so, that additional romance might be thrown about the rendezvous.

A whirlwind of applause burst from the large audience at the unexpected disclosure. Mrs. Hankins's sister buried her face in her handkerchief as Mr. Snarry rushed wildly from the arbour; and in the madness of desperation, unable to find his own hat, seized the plumed bonnet of Mr. Fipps, and extinguished the glaring telltale in an instant.

But the mischief was done, and the excitement did not stop with the burning case. The audience again cheered loudly; Mrs. Hankins went into hysterics, and was taken into the banqueting-hall; and her spouse rushed madly to the summer-house, declaring that he would have Mr. Snarry's best heart's blood, or fall himself, either of which consummations, in the perfect absence of anything like weapons, would have appeared, upon calm reflection, somewhat difficult to bring about. But when the protector of his sister-in-law's propriety reached the arbour, both the late inmates had flown; and he was compelled to be satisfied by wreaking verbal vengeance upon Mr. Fipps, who had remained aghast, and nearly paralysed, ever since the beginning of the catastrophe.

CHAP. II.

AN UNEXPECTED PARTY VISITS MR. ROSSET'S ARENA.

THE unflinching nerve and muscular strength shown by Vincent in rescuing Brandon from the clutches of the tigress was not without its effect on Mr. Rosset. He immediately perceived that he would be a very valuable addition to his *corps olympique*; and the next morning, when he accompanied Mr. Fogg to the theatre, the manager began to test his capability.

A curious sight was the circus in the morning. All the dens had been removed into an inner tent, around which their caravans were stationed; the tan and sawdust had

been raked very smooth, and a young man in a light, thin jacket and trowsers, with buff slippers, was rehearsing an equestrian act upon two horses, upon which he leapt over a thin gate of laths, the top bars of which were so contrived that they opened to the horses' legs, and closed up again immediately. There was no music, and the scene altogether had such a slow appearance, that no one would have recognised in the performer of the morning the spangled "Tartarean hunter of the wilderness," who went round the circle, flashing like a meteor in the evening.

In the centre of the ring, Mr. Rosset was instructing a small pony in what the Terpsichorean advertisements call "dancing and deportment;" but the small horse did not appear to evince any great disposition for the usages of polite society. Rosset had strapped up the hoofs of its fore feet to the upper part of the leg; and was now making the animal crawl upon its knees after him, with its nose grubbing in the sawdust all round the circle, by dint of whip, halter, and threatening persuasion. But when, at night, the pony rang a bell for some oats on a gilt plate, and sat at a table-cloth fringed with tinsel, people imagined that he was a most happy animal to be thus attended to. They did not see him during the morning's tuition.

Mr. Fogg was sitting in the orchestra, as far away from the tent where the animals were as he could well be, now and then putting in a few remarks upon such things that struck his imagination vividly.

"I should like to do a drama," said he, "upon Gulliver's Travels."

"It's been done," returned Mr. Rosset.

"The difficulty now is to find what has not been done," observed Mr. Fogg.

"I never have," replied the manager proudly; "at least by authors. I pay for all my pieces by the night; and then if they don't run, it's the fault of the writers—if they do, it benefits both."

"Then if a play is unlucky, it is a dead loss to the author," remarked Mr. Fogg mildly.

"Of course it is," returned the other; but what's his

loss compared to mine in getting it up? He can only lose two or three quires of paper."

"But his ideas—the wear and tear of brain," continued Fogg.

"Oh, that's all nothing; you don't pay anything, you know, for ideas and brains: they come natural."

Mr. Fogg perceived that the value of mental labour was not understood by the circus manager. He therefore returned to his original position.

"I still think you might do something with Gulliver's Travels. Not with the little people and the great ones, but the horses with the strange names that nobody knows how to pronounce any more than if they were Welsh,—much less to spell."

"Well, do it—do it," said Mr. Rosset; "only it's difficult to manage a lot of horses by themselves upon the stage. This cursed pony can't be left alone by himself yet; as he is, he tries to fire off the wine-bottle, and drink out of the pistol. Stupid brute! one would think some horses were entirely idiotic."

And, by way of correction for the future, he gave the pony a pretty smart cut with his whip.

"Couldn't something new be contrived?" said Mr. Fogg; "people have seen ponies at supper so often. I've read of a horse that danced the tight-rope."

"Ah—I know," answered Rosset; "in what's his name's book—Strutt's Times and Passports—I've been told of it, and don't believe a word. My horses are very nearly as much Christians as I am; but they couldn't do that. Heyday! eleven o'clock. Now William, call the ladies and gents for the entry."

Several of the company now made their appearance upon the summons of the call-boy, including Mrs. F. Rosset, who was introduced to Vincent. She was a fine-looking woman, with a hand that felt like horn, and a voice which sounded as if, having talked amongst sawdust and horse-hair so long, it had imbibed a large quantity of both. She had been an actress from her birth, but only lately an equestrian. As is often the case, there was the stage in

every one of her gestures and attitudes ; and her speeches were all made up of conventional dramatic sentences. And when Vincent expressed the gratification he experienced from the introduction, she said, " You do me proud." The other *écupères* were also handsome girls, even in their common toilets, but they were not remarkable for grammatical correctness or fluency of expression when they spoke. However, in their instance, physical rather than intellectual superiority was looked for, and provided they could stick tight to their saddle, and say " Come up ! " or " Hold hard ! " this was all that was required of them.

Vincent was mounted on a horse that had formed one of the pair upon which the gentleman in the light dress, who turned out to be Mr. F. Rosset—the " Energetic Whirlwind," —had been doing the " Tally-ho of Thermopylæ," or something of the kind. As he patted the back of the animal, a cloud of white powder flew about, covering his dress, which at first he took for some remarkable physiological phenomenon, connected with the idiosyncrasy of circus horses.

" Hi ! " cried Mr. Rosset, as he saw it. " Hi, Simmons ! why isn't that mare cleaned ? "

" I hadn't time, sir," replied the groom.

" Never mind, Mr. Scatterbrains, Thingumtight, What-is-it ? It's only chalk."

" Oh !—I don't care," replied Vincent ; " only I don't see what you chalk your horses for."

" Always do, sir, in daring acts of equitation upon bare-backed steeds ; that's why we always use white horses for it. They couldn't keep their footing without, nohow ; leastwise the generality. My Fred could hang on by his eyelashes, if it was wanted."

The *corps* now commenced the rehearsal of the "*Wild Cotillion of Queen Elizabeth and the Tartar Horde of Pekin*," and then Mr. Rosset became a person wonderful to gaze upon, as he took his place on the elevated orchestra, by the big drum, upon which he thumped, from time to time, with the handle of his stick, whenever he wanted to procure silence. For his energy and emphasis were alike wonderful. Indeed, as he remarked to Mr. Fogg, " unless

a man had cast-iron lungs, and could swear hard enough to split an oak plank and turn the sky yellow, he need not be a master of a circus."

In the written programme of the performance which Mr. F. Rosset read from time to time to guide the manœuvres of the company, there was a direction to the "Horde," that, having encamped, they were to implore the protection of their guardian spirit. Nobody appeared precisely to know what this meant, until Mr. Rosset, senior, thus interpreted it:

"Halloo! you, sirs—look here, and be d—d to you. Suppose that candle-hoop's the guardian spirit; very well. Now you get off your horses, and make 'em lie down, and then look at the candle-hoop, as much as to say, 'Don't shirk us, there's a jolly good chap.' That's it—very good. Now again.—Will—you—hold—your—tongues?"

This last speech was given with an obligato bang on the drum between every word, which had the effect of silencing the talkers.

"Now, then," continued Mr. Rosset, "encamp, and go to sleep with the horses for your pillows.—Mr. Scatterwood, put your head between the mare's hind-heels.—You needn't be afraid—she's very quiet, and it's more effective.—Now, ladies—*ladies!*!"

Another solo on the drum.

"Do pray attend. You keep guard by the watch-fires."

Mrs. F. Rosset was bold enough to inquire where the watch-fires were supposed to be.

"Bless me! anywhere—there! that's a watch-fire," replied Mr. Rosset, taking off his hat and throwing it into the arena. "Now then, ladies, keep watch over that hat, whilst your lovers are asleep."

"That does not strike me as being very gallant," observed Mr. Fogg.

"Hush!" returned Rosset; "you don't understand it. Love, you know,—woman's devotion—touching—affects the shilling audience. That's a good tableau—isn't it? Only lights, and music, and dresses will make such a difference, you know."

Mr. Fogg certainly thought so too ; the adjuncts would make a very great difference. And then he continued :

" Why don't you get up a local scene, and call it Lady Godiva ? "

" Ah ! um ! " replied Mr. Rosset, hesitating ; " not bad, but you see the difficulty would be about Godiva herself. I don't think I could find anybody to play it. "

" To the eye of the poet and artist ——— "

" Yes, I know — very proper, " interrupted Mr. Rosset : " but our audience are not all poets and artists ; they've got eyes like other people. No — it wouldn't do. "

Some more scenes were gone through, including the performance of a heavy, thick-set man, known as " the Bounding Ball of the arena, " and then the troop separated for dinner, to meet again at six.

Mr. Rosset's bills had answered in attracting an audience, for by the hour of commencement, every seat was filled. Mrs. F. Rosset sat in the tilted cart at the principal entrance, until the very last minute, half in her arena dress, over which a cloak was thrown, and wearing a fine bonnet and feathers in style similar to those which used to be patronised by the ladies who presided, under umbrellas, over the *alfresco* gaming tables at the races, at which everybody always threw numbers next door to the great prize. And when the time arrived for her to join the others, Mr. Rosset took her place to look after the currency. But beyond this, he did not appear in any public capacity.

Vincent thought his old manner of life was beginning again, as he put on a species of Chinese dress, together with some of the other riders, in an apartment between a tent, a stable, and a dressing-room. And a gloom fell upon his spirits, for the moment, as he reflected on his position, dragged down lower and lower from his proper station, without any apparent means of extricating himself. But in the midst of these dark thoughts, he was called upon to mount and appear before the audience, in the " grand entry ; " and then his attention was too much occupied with riding in endless figures of eights amongst the others, to think of anything else.

The amusements went on. Gentlemen in flesh tights

jumped over strips of cloth, coming down on the horse again ; whilst, at the end of the ride, the music played most furiously to impress the audience with an idea that the steed was going as fast as the large cymbal or the drum. Ladies also sped round, bearing three or four yards of pink gauze, which floated behind them like a scarf, and threw themselves into seductive attitudes, looking gracefully at chimerical objects ; and the clown indulged in jokes, honoured by age, but which, notwithstanding, produced the same laughs as they did fifty years ago : for, it is a blessed privilege of jokes, and tends much to soothe their advanced age, that the older they get, the better and warmer is their reception ; and a really venerable *bon-mot* need never fear that a flaming young jest will stand higher in popularity, or be greeted with a more cheering welcome. So, when Mr. Merriman picked up a straw that was lying on the sawdust, for fear it should throw him down, and afterwards said he was going to play one of "Straw's waltzes" upon it, there was great laughter ; there was more when he spoke of his idle man John, whom he always gave a pint of yeast to for supper, to make him rise in the morning ; but when he said that he had ceased to be a spinster, and married a wife with a wooden leg, who used to help him plant beans by walking over the field before him to dibble the hole, there was such a roar of merriment that it almost became painful to see how the contemplation of a human infirmity could produce so much laughter. Everybody, the young folks especially, loved Mr. Merriman, and their moral sense of right and wrong was entirely lost sight of where he was concerned. If the boys had met him by day, they would have cheered him in the thoroughfare, but they never came across his path—at least, that they were aware of. They little knew that the pale and melancholy man, with thin lips and attenuated frame, whom they often met, was their idol of the evening's entertainments.

Business proved good, and Mr. Rosset pitched his tent at Coventry for many evenings. Vincent became good friends with every member of the company, from the elephant downwards ; and Brandon especially took such a

liking to him, and proceeded to instruct him in so many of the mysteries of brute-taming, that there is no doubt he would have been a "jungle monarch" himself in a short time. But a change in his destinies was on the eve of taking place. There was a full house one evening; and Vincent had just been assisting at a grand performance of the whole troop, in which they had successively to jump along a spring board, and over a horse's back, — except Mr. Merriman, who usually evaded the performance by an ignoble method of proceeding, such as stopping short when he came to the leap, or stooping down and running between the horse's legs. The performance was at its height, when Mrs. Rosset sent to the proprietor of the circus in great alarm, to say, that a carriage had just drawn up to the entrance, and that she was sure there was no room left upon the two-shilling benches.

Mr. Rosset, who was habited upon that particular occasion to do honour to the mayor and corporation, whose bespeak it was, in a dress which affected a neat compromise between the costumes of a jockey and a dragoon, directly bustled out to the door, determined to convert the orchestra waggon into an extempore private box, if there was occasion. He found the information correct; there was a carriage-and-four at the entrance, with the horses steaming, as if neither whip nor spur had been spared on the journey, and a gentleman already on the ground, standing on the step.

"Have you any one named Scattergood in your company?" asked the gentleman hurriedly.

"I have," replied Mr. Rosset; "do you wish tickets for his benefit, because he is in the ring just now?"

"No, no," said the gentleman, "I must see him."

And to the great bewilderment of Mr. Rosset, he rushed past the pay place, and into the theatre, where he directly recognised Vincent. To jump over the barrier of the arena, and drag his newly-found acquaintance from the ring, was the work of a few seconds, which proceeding checked some applause the audience were beginning to indulge in; for they conceived at first this interruption was

part of the performance, in which the stranger was to throw off an infinity of coats and waistcoats, and, lastly, appear in a pink shape-dress, as Fame, blowing a long wooden post-horn, and riding very fast, to the delight of the beholders. But what good-hearted Mr. Fogg would have called a better "situation" even than this, took place when Vincent was brought to the carriage; for then, in spite of his curious tights and spangled dress, a young lady actually leant forward, and throwing her arms round his neck, kissed him, as he presented himself, more astonished than anybody, at the door. And another lady, much older, burst into tears as she also pressed forward to receive him, and addressed a few words to him in a well-known voice, that went to his very heart: it was indeed his mother and Clara, who had thus so unexpectedly once more met him.

And the gentleman who had so curiously interrupted the performance was Mr. Herbert. He now hurriedly introduced himself to Vincent, for the hearts of the others were too full to think of anything else. And, to the destruction of Mr. Rosset's hopes that another carriage party was about to occupy the best seats, Vincent was made to rush back to the dressing-tent, and hurriedly change his attire; so that, in two minutes, in his ordinary clothes, he was again in the carriage, bowling along towards one of the best hotels in Coventry, leaving Mr. Rosset and his company perfectly aghast at this wonderful whirl of events.

There had been a great many curious assemblages in the room of that hotel: there had been run-away couples, funeral parties, and coroner's inquests; coffins had rested there upon trestles during the dreary journey of those who had died in distant parts of England, to the old churchyard in which was their family vault, and the same trestles had supported the tables of convivial dinners, when the room rang with merriment and harmony. The air of that room had clung to the body, and filtered through the winding-sheet of the dead; it had reeked with the vapours of wine and feasting; youth, lights, and revelry — age, darkness, and sorrow, had alike been its occupants; but it

never contained a party so deeply interested in each other, who had met under such strange circumstances, who had so much to tell, as those who were now assembled in it.

And when the first burst of greeting was over, Vincent heard from Clara what had happened ; for his mother was too agitated at meeting him, after such a long and strange absence, to enter fully into particulars. Herbert made up some imaginary appointment in the city, which took him away for awhile, and then Clara began to tell everything ; not more, however, than Herbert would have found he already knew, had he stayed. And if Clara had possessed fifty tongues, she would not have thought they spoke fast enough for all the good news she had to convey ; for during her stay at Brabants—and it was only for one night and half a day—she had so interested Mr. Grantham in his favour, and cleared Vincent's character, putting his disposition in its true light, that that gentleman had almost consented to receive him, and repented of his harsh treatment, through all his pride. And Amy had sent so many messages, and even a little note, with her father's knowledge too ; and old uncle Gregory had astonished them all, and upset Lisbeth's propriety of demeanour, and paralysed Mrs. Chicksand, by coming one day to call upon Mr. Scattergood, full of all his old notions, which, however, they let him uphold to the full of his bent. And then he opened his mind to them, and told them that his antipodean page, whom he had hired of the mountebanks, had turned out badly, and associated with thieves, who had attacked his house one night, since which he had decided upon not living alone any more. So that, if they could contrive to take a house, where he might have his own apartments fitted up in his own manner, he would come and live with them ; for he had no other relatives in the world, and looked upon all nurses and housekeepers as harpies and vampires.

All this was cheering news ; and Clara's eyes never sparkled so brightly, nor her face ever look so lovely, as whilst she poured her budget forth to Vincent. Had Herbert been there, he would have loved her more than ever. He came back in a little time ; and then Vincent

soon understood in what position they were about to stand towards each other. And when the mother had somewhat recovered the shock of their meeting, which, after their long separation, had been to her a very trying one, she joined in the conversation as well.

How happy they were ! The quarters from the old church appeared to be chiming the minutes, so quickly did the time fly on ; and when at last the bell tolled midnight, and its information was corroborated by the occupants of the other towers, there was one general expression of surprise that it was so late. It was a mistake—all the clocks were evidently wrong—it could not be more than ten. They wished Vincent to stay in the hotel that night ; but he preferred going back to the little inn where he had lodged since his arrival at Coventry, promising to come back very early in the morning.

CHAP. III.

THE LAST APPEARANCE OF MR. FOGG.—THE RETURN HOME.

VINCENT slept but little that night, for his brain was in a perfect whirl. The bright sun darted through the windows before he closed his eyes ; and then his mind was equally confused. He slumbered but for an hour or two ; and as soon as he heard footsteps in the chamber above, betokening that Mr. Fogg had got up, or, as he more gracefully said, had sprung from his couch, Vincent rose also, impatient to tell his good friend everything, and feeling assured that he would enter into his happiness.

And he was not deceived. The kindly dramatic author, —who had been at the circus last evening when Vincent quitted it in so strange a manner, and who had ever since been in great anxiety as to the cause and result of such a proceeding, until he had determined to make it a situation at the end of the first act of the next drama he wrote, feeling assured it would excite the feelings of everybody

—this good and simple soul was as overjoyed as Vincent himself. And when Vincent told him of all the things Clara had accomplished, he applauded with his hands as he would have done at a playhouse; and inwardly congratulated himself, at the same time, at having found a new heroine of the domestic drama, who might eclipse all the virtuous poor men's daughters, and moral servants-of-all-work, who had ever figured in his most affecting pieces.

Vincent went over to the circus to bid a hasty good-bye to such of his late associates as were there in the morning; and then collecting his few things together—they were very few—prepared to join his mother and sister. But before he left their little inn, he took a hearty farewell of Mr. Fogg, who was about to depart that morning for Henley-in-Arden, and rehearse his new piece with the dolls of Mr. Rosset's establishment.

"I leave you in better spirits now than when we parted that evening on the wharf," said Vincent, "but I am not the less grateful for what you have done for me."

"Belay there, belay," returned Mr. Fogg, as his mind reverted to the days of the "Lee Shore of Life." "I did but do my duty. Where there's enough for one, there's enough for two; and the man who would not share his crust with the hapless stranger, deserves not to defy the present or look forward with honest aspirations to the future."

"I wish I had something to give you as a keepsake," said Vincent. "Not but what I hope to see you again before long; still I wish you not to forget me altogether. I have nothing but my old pipe—it has been a long, long way with me; an old friend, who never withheld its consolation when I was hard-up or in trouble. Will you accept it?"

"The calumet of amity!" observed Mr. Fogg, as he took the pipe from Vincent, and gazed at it with fondness. "I shall preserve it for your sake."

"And may it serve you as faithfully as it has done me!" said Vincent; "for, in its time, it has been everything

but lodging. I never felt alone with that old pipe. In the dark dreary nights there was comfort and companionship in its glowing bowl; and by day, when the smoke floated about me, I used to fancy that it showed me how the clouds of trouble would disperse, if we had but a little patience. I have been very hungry too, when that old pipe has brought me my dinner."

During this speech of Vincent's, Mr. Fogg had been anxiously searching in his various pockets, and at last produced a pencil-case of common manufacture, which he placed in the hand of his friend.

"And that is all I have got to offer you in return," he said; "but it has been an 'umble and faithful servant also to me; the parent of my dramas."

"There is a seal on the top," continued Mr. Fogg; "a seal of green glass; it bears a ship tossed by the waves, and the motto, 'Such is life.' It suggested to me the 'Lee Shore'; and the motto, with variations, has furnished many a sentiment for the applause of the galleries."

"You could not give me anything I should prize more," said Vincent, as he took Mr. Fogg's humble offering.

They left the house together, and walked on until their journey turned to different ways; at which point, with every reiterated good wish and expression of gratitude, Vincent shook his friend warmly by the hand, and they parted. But as Mr. Fogg went up the street, he turned back many times to nod to Vincent, until he came to the corner; and then, as the morning sunshine fell upon him, he waved his hand in final adieu, like a spirit departing in a bright *tableau* from one of his own pieces, with an air of good omen; and so went on his way.

And sunshine came to Vincent too—to him and to those so dear to him; the sunshine of the heart, the bright hope of brighter times to come. Although it was still early, they had been long expecting him; and when he reached the hotel, carelessly swinging the bundle in his hand, which contained all his effects, the horses were immediately ordered; whilst Clara insisted upon his taking a second breakfast, watching everything he tasted as if he had been

an infant—firmly believing that he had lived in a state of absolute starvation for some months; and nearly choking him with her anxiety to see that he was served with everything at once.

The carriage was soon up to the door, and they once more started to return to London. Ninety-one miles—it was nothing. Their conversation allowed them to take no heed of time or distance. The journey was nothing but a rapid succession of arrivals at inns, and ringing of bells by excited hostlers, for no other purpose that could be made out than to summons themselves, and call all those together who were already there in attendance; and taking out horses, and putting them to; and then, again, flying along the hard level road. Ninety-one miles—all they had still to say would not have been got over in nine hundred, had the journey been of that length. Vincent remarked that Herbert paid for everything, and from a slender silk purse, with bright steel beads and sparkling tassels, by a curious coincidence precisely similar to the one which Clara gave him during their brief, but miserable interview in Mrs. Constable's hall! There could be no mistake about its fairy texture, or whose were the active and taper fingers that had manufactured it.

Afternoon came on; then twilight: yet as it got cooler, Clara, singularly enough, would not go under the head of the carriage, but made Vincent sit there by the side of his mother, whilst she remained close to Herbert, shrouded in some complicated fashion or another—they themselves only knew how—by his large cloak, in a manner which appeared exceedingly comfortable. And before the moon was well up, the lights of London could be plainly seen reflected in the sky, coming nearer and nearer, until the first lamp shone out on the roadside.

They left the level turnpike-way behind them, and rattled over the stones at last. But there was nothing unpleasant in the commotion; no—they seemed to clatter forth a rude welcome to the travellers; and there was an excitement in their noise and rough jolting, that sent the blood still quicker through its channels. Then came the

long glittering lines of gas upon the bridges, and the wider thoroughfares and poorer shops across the water ; next, rows of uniform houses, with gardens in front ; and, here and there, trees and open spaces, until the carriage at last stopped at the tenement of Mrs. Chicksand. We might more properly have said of her husband : but as he seldom appeared, and nobody knew him when he did, his wife was the prominent feature of the establishment, both in her public and domestic position.

They were evidently expected. There was more than ordinary light in the drawing-room ; and as the carriage stopped, the blinds were thrust on one side, and various forms were seen peeping out. And Mrs. Chicksand had lighted the passage lamp, which was an illumination only indulged in upon extraordinary occasions, and chiefly dependant upon any end of wax candle which could be put by without being accounted for to the lodgers. And that lady herself came to the door : giving orders to Lisbeth to lie in ambush on the kitchen stairs, half-way down, in a clean cap and new ribbons, and be in readiness to bring up any extra assistance, or body of able tea-things that might be required.

They were all there. Mr. Scattergood and Freddy, whose holidays had come round ; and Amy — slyly invited by Clara to stay a few days, and with her father's permission — trembling, blushing, smiling, and almost crying by turns. Mr. Scattergood, in his general absent manner, which on the present occasion might perhaps be considered an advantage, received Vincent as if he had only been a day or two absent, certainly not even now perfectly comprehending what was going on, in the same spirit of easy apathy which had been his enemy through life, until he got his present appointment in the government office, where such a temperament was of no consequence. And Clara and Amy had, as usual, such a deal to say to one another, whilst the former was taking off her travelling attire, that Mrs. Scattergood thought they were never coming down again, until she sent Herbert up to knock and summons them. Even then, Amy came back by herself, whilst Her-

bert had apparently something of great consequence to communicate to Clara outside the door; but what it was nobody ever knew except Lisbeth, who chanced to be coming up stairs with the tea-things just at the moment. And as she never told, nobody was, with these exceptions, ever any the wiser. It could, however, have been nothing very unpleasant, for the whole party were in high spirits, laughing and talking until such a late hour, that when Mr. Bodle returned at an unholy hour from some concert, at which he had been conducting, he found an hieroglyphical scroll impaled upon his candle, which clever people might have deciphered into an order not to put up the chain, nor lock the door and hide the key in the fanlight, as was his wont to do. Even long after he sought his iron bedstead, sounds of conversation came from below, and sometimes songs in the demi-audibility of a floor beneath, which at last mingled with his sleeping thoughts, and produced dreams of confused construction, in which the lady of his affections, who lived next door, figured, together with everybody else, under the most extravagant circumstances — one of those inextricable visions which are alone dependant upon love, or Welsh rarebits, for their origin.

CHAP. IV.

THE LATEST INTELLIGENCE OF EVERYBODY.—CONCLUSION.

IN the dramas which our friend Mr. Glenalvon Fogg was in the habit of producing, there were certain situations, towards the close of the last scene, wherein the audience generally, to his extreme disgust, were accustomed to rise up and think about their shawls or the difficulty of procuring a conveyance in the rush, heedless of what was going on upon the stage. For they saw that the various characters were rapidly approaching universal reconciliation; and so they cared little further to interest themselves in the development of the plot, albeit the "tag," as Mr.

Fogg technically termed it, was to him a most important point, and cost him usually more labour than any other portion of the drama.

Now the "tag" is usually framed in this manner; it is explained for fear the courteous reader should not precisely understand what we mean, as well as to furnish young beginners with a guide, being an appeal, if cleverly made, which not only winds up the performance with a flourish, but even assuages the serpent of disapprobation who may have commenced winding about the house. When all parties are made happy, and the old man has forgiven them, the popular character should step forward, in a touchingly appealing manner to the lamps, and say, "But our happiness still further depends upon your forgiveness; let me therefore solicit that"—&c.; to be filled up as circumstances require. Or, when alluding to present joy, the popular character may add, "And if these kind friends will but look kindly on our delinquencies, we may be tempted (according to the nature of the piece) either 'to take A Trip to Anywhere,' or 'to claw off The Lee Shore of Life,' or 'to pass through the Seven Sinks of Profligacy,'—every evening until further notice."

We know that our own "tag" is fast approaching; but we request, although the shadow of forthcoming events may be thrown upon the progress of our story, that you will not yet quit our pages, but bear with us a little longer. Yet we do not wish to weary you, as indeed is sometimes the case with certain performances that we have seen. We are not going to drag two chairs down to the lights and commence, "Thirteen months since"—in allusion to the time that has passed since our *dramatis personæ* appeared in these leaves, rather than on these boards. We only beg you will keep us company yet a little time before we part.

In a few days after the arrival of Vincent, his family changed their abode, and were domiciled in a neat small house, still in the neighbourhood, however, of their old quarters. Mrs. Chicksand after their departure began to get in despair. The bill remained up for a period hitherto

unheard of ; Mr. Bodle alone remained constant to the household gods ; and, in the absence of other lodgers, the fare became in every sense a reduced one. But one fine morning Mrs. Chicksand was delighted by the sudden appearance of Mr. Snarry, fresh and blooming from Gravesend, who, accompanied by Mr. Jollit, marched up the small garden and knocked at the door. Mrs. Chicksand's heart beat quickly—she indulged a hope that Mr. Snarry had caught an occupant for the top of the house. But it was better still.

“And so the first floor is empty,” observed Mr. Snarry to Mrs. Chicksand when the greetings had passed between them. “I think I may want it before long.”

“Thank you, sir,” replied the hostess, “what I say to C. is, that I'd sooner have fifty gentlemen than one lady, even if they were all on the second floor.”

Mr. Jollit directly imagined that he saw the half-hundred of lodgers located in that partition of the house ; and had a laugh to himself, in consequence, at the bare idea of the scene of confusion it would create.

“But,” said Mr. Snarry, with a suspicion of a blush upon his cheek, “I fear there will be a lady, Mrs. Chicksand : a great event in my life is about to take place.”

“Indeed, sir ;” said Mrs. Chicksand, who was directly sorry she had spoken, and had a faint idea of what Mr. Snarry was nervous in communicating.

“Melancholy thing, ma'am, of our poor friend,” said Mr. Jollit to Mrs. Chicksand, with solemn gravity : “he sat in the sun one day, and it flew to his head : quite lost his reason since he was here last ; obliged to have a keeper. Do you find strait waistcoats with the sheets and tablecloths ?”

“Don't mind him, Mrs. Chicksand,” said Mr. Snarry, with a look of mild rebuke. “The fact is,” and he hesitated, “the fact is, I am going to be married.”

Whereupon Mr. Jollit suddenly inflated his cheeks, and imitated a person in the agonies of suppressed laughter, until Lisbeth was compelled to dust nothing upon the mantel-piece, and then put it straight to conceal her own

disposition to join in Mr. Jollit's merriment. But the prospect of a first-floor kept Mrs. Chicksand staid and orderly.

"And so the Scattergoods are gone!" observed Mr. Snarry, when the revelation had been made, and he had been congratulated thereon. "Ah! I thought once I should not have another love!" and he sighed sentimentally as he added, "this house brings her to my mind."

And then he added a little couplet wherein "*toujours*" rhymed with "*amours*," upon which Mr. Jollit begged he would not talk Hebrew, because he did not understand it.

"And may I be bold enough to ask who the lady is?" asked Mrs. Chicksand.

"You have seen her here," said Mr. Snarry; "it is Mrs. Hankins's sister."

"Oh! a nice young lady;" returned the hostess, smirking at this proof of Mr. Snarry's confidence; "and that Lisbeth always thought, and so did I; and told Chicksand that Mr. Jollit was sweet there."

"Mr. Jollit is sweet everywhere," returned that gentleman. "No, no! Mrs. Chickseybidly; Mr. Jollit has still got his senses: he looks upon marriage as a popular deception. Now, Snarry, if you have settled everything, we will go, or we shall miss the boat."

A private conversation of five minutes with the landlady settled everything; and then the friends departed. But as they turned from the road, Mr. Jollit indulged in another quiet joke, by calling the attention of an omnibus cad with his finger to an imaginary balloon in the air: and then laughing at him for being taken in, and bowing to a salutation less friendly than forcible, that was hurled after him, they went their way towards the embarking point of the steamer that was to waft Mr. Snarry back to love and Rosherville.

Mr. Gregory Scattergood kept his word. As soon as the family were established in their new abode, he took up his residence in one of the wings, or rather the pinions, being the extreme apartment; and having furnished it inversely, to his own liking, admitted that he was perfectly

comfortable—at least, as much so as his perverted notions of gravity would permit. And he took such a fancy to Clara that he was always making her little presents, and as much as intimated that all he had in the world would be left to her. And Herbert, who was there every day, went and told the old gentleman all the news, and consoled with him upon the state of things generally, until he was no less pleased with him than with his niece.

Taught by the sharp lessons of the past, that carelessness might almost degenerate into criminality, Vincent became an altered character. He was enabled before long, through the interest of those who would have helped him before but they mistrusted him, to gain a situation, which, although humble with respect to remuneration at present, promised yet better things. And in a short time he presented himself at Brabants, where he was received with great amity by Mr. Grantham. It had been a hard struggle between that gentleman's pride and his better feelings to allow him to come there; but he found that Amy's affections were unchangeably fixed on Vincent; and loving her dearer than his life, he at last made this sacrifice to his daughter's happiness. And thus cheeringly—the ties becoming each day firmer that bound the various parties together—did some months pass quickly away.

* * * * *

It is again winter. The frost has once more imprisoned in its iron grasp the marshes on which we first became acquainted with our hero. Again do the horses' hoofs ring and echo over the frozen roads; the stars twinkle with electric brilliancy in the heavens; and red warm lights gleam from the cottages upon the bare and sparkling shrubs.

There is a huge fire on the hearth of the old hall at Brabants, toying and playing lambently around the dry logs, as its reflection dances on the ancient windows, and throws fantastic giant shadows upon the decaying fretted ceiling. The wind is blowing sharply without, the casements rattle, the vanes creak on the gables, and now and then a loose tile may be heard whirled down upon the

ground. But all is snug within. The more fiercely the wind blows, the more brightly the fire roars up the vast chimney ; any one who cared to look, might see its red sparks outside, flying high in the air.

A happy party is that now assembled in the old hall, which has been restored to a marvellous pitch of comfort. Away, on one side of the fire-place, Mr. Grantham, Mr. and Mrs. Scattergood, and the doctor from the village—a kind-hearted man, who brought almost all the inhabitants of that little world into it—have formed a rubber, sheltered from intruding draughts by a huge screen, that would take a man a long winter's night to study, so manifold are the objects of interest that adorn it. Closer to the iron "dogs" of the hearth are seated Vincent and Amy, in earnest but not grave conversation. It must be supposed, from their low tones, that it is not meant for anybody else to hear, and is therefore interesting only to themselves ; indeed it appears to be so. Herbert and Clara are opposite to them, playing at playing at chess ; for no move of any consequence has been made for the last half-hour, although they have been constantly talking to each other in the same manner as their companions. And Freddy is there too, rolling about on the floor before the fire with a large mastiff, certainly as big as he is, between whom and himself there appears to exist that intense familiarity and unity of disposition, which children alone are enabled to establish with animals.

They are all happy—very happy. The hands of the old clock, in the quaint carved frame against the gallery, are creeping round towards the last hour of the year : and when it strikes, their various pursuits are suspended for mutual greetings, and every good wish for the new year that love and affection can prompt. Brighter fortunes are in store for all ; and the future will derive more heartfelt pleasure, from the recollection of the troubles and anxieties of the past.

Fervent and sincere are those hopes for joy and happiness. Through the medium of our story, whose characters your favour called into being, let the same be conveyed to

you, and all those for whose welfare your own wishes are offered.

Again we are called upon to say farewell ; but for a brief period only. Let us, before we part, collect a little hasty intelligence of the other personages who have from time to time appeared before us.

There is a family residing in Fitzroy Square, whose governess has been changed as many times within the last six months. In consequence, the children have learned nothing, and mind nobody ; they are ignorant and overbearing, keeping the house in constant commotion, and annoying every one who comes to pay a visit. Mrs. Constable sometimes regrets that she cannot find another " young person " to teach them like Clara Scattergood.

A merry party have assembled on the first floor at Mrs. Chicksand's, for Mr. and Mrs. Snarry, whom we knew as " Mrs. Hankins's sister," have returned from their wedding tour to Dover. Mr. Joe Jollit is there, in high humour. Mr. Bodle plays appropriate airs on the piano ; and Mr. Bam is deep in the concoction of a wondrous bowl of punch ; while Mr. Rasselas Fipps has brought his flute, and has been playing mild obligatos to popular melodies during the evening. Mrs. Chicksand is in great good-humour, for there is prospect of many dishes left for the morrow ; and Lisbeth's various Christmas-boxes have helped to deck her in a style beyond the memory of the oldest charwoman who ever came to assist on similar occasions.

Christmas is being kept everywhere, and jollily too, except by Mr. Bolt, who is keeping it at the expense of government, for some misdemeanour, on board a floating tenement in the neighbourhood of Woolwich. All the Merchant Tailor boys are happy at home, for a good three weeks. Mr. Rosset's thriving receipts have enabled him to give his *corps olympique* a general treat on a night of non-performance.

And Mr. Glenalvon Fogg has returned to town, and

produced a successful pantomime over the water. His "Lee Shore" has been played all over the country, and the money has fallen in well accordingly ; whilst he has been applied to to write a piece, on its success, for one of the more important theatres. He looks more blooming, and less seedy, than heretofore ; and is on the eve of taking a benefit, "at the instigation of several of his friends," at which, be sure, there will be one box, if not more, taken by certain parties. He has not yet used Vincent up, as a character in any of his dramas : he has apparently too much respect for him ; "for," as he says, "a great many whom the world looks upon as loose fish, sometimes owe their name more to circumstances than a bad disposition ; and have often the best sort of stuff in their hearts to work upon, after all."

THE ARMOURER OF PARIS,

A ROMANCE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

THE ARMOURER OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

HOW PERINET MET QUEEN ISABELLE'S LOVER AT VINCENNES.

THROUGHOUT the Historical annals of the middle ages of France, there is not a period more fraught with dreary images of oppression, uncertainty, and distress, than the reign of the unfortunate monarch, Charles VI. Beloved by his people, in the first instance, to a degree that caused the appellation *Le Bien Aimé* to be added to his name, his mental aberration was felt as doubly severe by his subjects, inasmuch as the power assumed by others during his insanity was harsh, selfish, and oppressive ; and the contending factions by which the country was divided, stirred up perpetual feuds in the bosoms of her highest families.

Although the Salic law precluded the absolute government of a woman, yet the proud determined spirit of Isabelle de Bavière, in many instances, carried all before her ; and on the other side, the arrogance of those who held the passive and unconscious monarch in their toils, was at times equally adequate to the performance of the fullest prerogatives of sovereignty. Nor did this civil dissension spread its influence over the aristocracy alone. The *bourgeoisie* of France, and more especially of Paris, whilst each advocated the cause of D'Armagnac or of Bourgogne, introduced the spirit of discord to their own hearths, oftentimes causing the most bitter enmities between those who were bound together the closest by every tie of consanguinity

and affection. The vintage remained uncared for, the land assumed a barren and deserted aspect, the whole face of the country appeared to be suffering under the curse of an interdict ; and the people, already impoverished by the demands wrung from them for the luckless contest of Azincour, and ground down by new imposts, daily murmured in secret, as they awaited only a fitting occasion to break out into open revolt.

Things stood thus, when, one spring morning, whilst the deep obscurity that reigns over the hour or two immediately preceding the break of day, still flung its dark veil around the towers and ramparts of the castle of Vincennes, a solitary individual cautiously proceeded in the direction of that edifice, along the straggling road which conducted to the city of Paris, distant some three or four miles. Although mantled in a large cloak, which partially concealed his form and costume, he had the bearing of a high-born and courtly cavalier. And when the dancing gleam of the lantern which he displayed from time to time, although but for a second or two, when any obstacle arose to his progress, reflected its bright ray from some white and aged pollard, upon his countenance, it might have been observed that his face was rich in manly bearing and intellectual expression ; and the occasional displacement of his mantle, as it caught on the protruding branches of the trees that bordered his route, discovered that his garments were of fine and costly texture. Stealthily and silently as he proceeded, there appeared little to disturb his progress, for all around him was still as death. At times the distant bay of a hound, aroused by some nocturnal intruder, broke the silence ; or the more approximating challenge of the men-at-arms upon the ramparts, echoed through the woody park that surrounded the castle. Yet did the cavalier proceed with the greatest caution. Not a leaf fell rustling through the underwood in its course towards the ground—not a scared owl flew whooping from its covert—but he grasped the handle of his sword, and hurriedly turned his light in the direction whence the sounds proceeded.

As he approached the château, whose lofty and irregular turrets now rose in indistinct gloom before him, he became aware, for the first time, that some one was following. A light in one of the upper apartments of the castle threw a faint gleam over the greensward, in front of the low wall which encircled the fosse, by which he perceived the outline of a figure closely mantled as himself, moving with apparently the same caution towards the spot where he stood.

To extinguish the lamp he carried was the work of a moment; and then, drawing his sword, he rested against the wall, and watched the movements of the other party. But the new comer did not seem inclined to act on the offensive. On the contrary, he drew back a few steps; and finding his progress impeded by a huge oak, calmly folded his arms, and leaning against it, appeared to await the other's pleasure to commence a parley. The cavalier was evidently at a loss as to what course he should pursue. He moved onwards, still keeping close to the wall of the fosse, and his unknown follower immediately left the tree, and occupied the spot which the other had just deserted. Again they watched each other for a short time in mistrustful silence, which the cavalier was the first to break.

"Hallo, my master!" he cried in a low voice, as if careful that its sound should not reach the castle. "Will you please to change your route, or will you take the precedence?"

"Wherefore either one or the other?" demanded the stranger bluntly.

"Because," returned the cavalier, as he contemptuously eyed the evidently inferior apparel of his companion, "Because my blood is not sufficiently ennobled to require that a squire should wait upon me; and if I chose to be followed by a page, I would select one of more creditable appearance."

"By my faith, messire," answered the other composedly, "the provost would have a hard matter to choose between us. Nevertheless, I shall not change my road; because the one I am following leads to where I am going, and

finishes at this spot. At the same time I do not wish to hinder *your* journey."

"Mine finishes here also," replied the cavalier. "Is it not enough to tell you at once that I do not want your company?"

"Nor I yours," was the dogged retort.

"When this tone is assumed towards me," exclaimed the first speaker, advancing towards the intruder, "it must be sustained at the sword's point! Guard yourself, my master!—the night is not so dark but I can see to use a sword."

As he approached, the new comer leapt suddenly towards him, and seized his arm. "Hold, for an instant, I beseech, you," he exclaimed; "I have not come here to fight, nor have I the time to spare.—The Chevalier Bourdon!" he added in astonishment, as he recognised the features of his adversary.

"Hia!" cried the other, drawing his poniard with his left hand, "you know me then. Who art thou?"

"Leave your blade in its sheath, monseigneur," was the reply, "or you will regret having used it. I am called Perinet Leclerc. My father is an *échevin* of our good city, and keeper of the keys of the Porte St. Germain."

"You are the armourer, if I mistake not, of the Petit Pont?"

"The same, sir. I sold you that bright harness which you wore at the last tourney, when Madame Isabelle, our gracious queen, crowned you with her own fair hands."

"And what seek you at the castle of Vincennes?" asked the young courtier. "Are you ignorant, Perinet, that at this time of the night no one has right of entry, whatever his rank may be? Are you ignorant that all the gates are closed, and the drawbridges raised?"

"I am not more ignorant of all this than yourself, monseigneur," answered the armourer; "and yet you are here also!"

"How then do you expect to obtain admission?"

"At the spot where you now stand, I can descend into the fosse, which is dry. By means of the rough masonry

opposite, I can scale the wall ; and by the rampart above, where no sentinel is stationed, I can enter the castle. It appears to me that we have interrupted each other at the commencement of the same journey, *beausire*."

" You have acted foolishly in thus placing yourself as a spy upon my actions," said Bourdon angrily. " Had I not been certain, Perinet, that you were honest and loyal, a stroke of my dagger would before this have laid you at my feet, as a spy of the constable D'Armagnac."

" A spy of D'Armagnac !" exclaimed Perinet hastily. " Ah, sir, you little know me, if you harbour such a thought, were it only for an instant. But you shall be undeceived. I will confess to you a project, of which my own father is unconscious. A spy of the constable ! It is he that has separated me from my betrothed."

" What mean you ? " asked the cavalier.

" You shall hear. Marie has been brought up by Madame Bourdichon, the wife of a pewterer ; a good and honest bourgeois, who took her when she was quite an infant ; for she is poor, monseigneur, and has no relation in the world. The house which they inhabit is close to the dwelling of the constable, — the Hôtel St. Paul ; so close, indeed, that the Count D'Armagnac must pass the shop either to go out from or return to his abode."

" They see a brilliant *cortège*, then, when he goes abroad," observed Bourdon.

" Alas ! my lord ; his splendid equipage has partly caused my trouble. Marie was never tired at gazing at it ; and with girlish delight, whenever she heard the tramp of horses in the court, she always left her work, and flew to the door, joyous and delighted as a child. One day, the constable observed her by chance, and she immediately attracted his notice. I do not wonder at it, for few saw her who did not admire her. When I called that day at the usual hour, I found the old people sad and pensive. I learnt that in my absence, a man had been there in the name of the Count D'Armagnac, offering to place Marie in the service of a great lady, who could insure her an enviable fortune. Judge my agony when I learnt, that,

frightened by his threats, or dazzled by his promised grandeur, they had allowed Marie to depart with him."

"And you have not seen her since?"

"I will tell you, monseigneur. I passed a month—a long, long month—in seeking her vainly, without ascertaining what had become of her. One night, when I returned home, comfortless and broken-hearted, I found a neighbour at my house, one Madame Josselin, who had just returned from Vincennes, where she had been selling a great number of jewels to the queen. She gave me a ring—it was Marie's—one I had given her, which she always wore. I then knew where she was concealed, but I passed twenty days at the castle, without being able to meet her. Yesterday morning, by pure chance, I entered the chapel. The queen was engaged at her devotions, and you were kneeling at her side. A lady of her suite approached me, and whispered: 'To-morrow, an hour before day-break, in this place, we will fly together.' It was herself that spoke, my lord, and I am here to meet her."

"Give me your hand, *mon brave*," said Bourdon, drawing off his jewelled glove, and grasping the rough palm of the armourer in his own; "if, like you, I was deeply in love, I would envy you, Perinet, for you can carry off her you adore; whilst I—but no matter," he continued quickly. "*Allons*, we must descend."

"I am ready," said Perinet, divesting himself of his cloak, which, together with Bourdon's he flung over the fosse.

"When we have gained the rampart," said the young courtier, "we must separate. If you turn to the right, you will find a short passage that will conduct you to the chapel. You must follow its course in deep silence—you must not even breathe aloud, or the guard will hear you. *Bon courage*, and God protect you."

"And you, also, monseigneur," rejoined his companion.

"Do you hear aught stirring?" asked Bourdon. "It is about the time that the guard makes the round of the castle."

"All is quiet," replied Perinet.

"So, then—now for the venture," said the cavalier, as he crossed the low wall, and cautiously descended into the fosse. "Place your foot to the right; you will feel a projecting stone, which affords safe resting."

"Pardieu!" exclaimed the armourer, as he followed Bourdon's directions; "it is not the first time that you have made this journey, monseigneur; you know the road too well."

"Perinet," cried the other, from the fosse, "on your life, let no word ever escape your lips touching our meeting of to-night;—I implore it."

"You need not fear me, sir," replied the other, as he reached the ground. "Ha!" he added hurriedly, "down! down upon your face! the patrol is approaching!"

CHAP. II.

HOW BOURDON WAS ARRESTED BY D'ARMAGNAC.

THE alarm given by Perinet Leclerc, as he reached the bottom of the fosse with his companion, was not without foundation. An instant afterwards, the glare of the cressets carried by the patrol, was visible on the walls and ramparts of the castle, and even extended its illumination to the trees in the park around. As they came on, reflecting the red light at an hundred points from their bright armour, and throwing their huge shadows against the highest towers in flitting and confused outline, the two adventurers crouched down in silence against the lower supports of the drawbridge; and, somewhat concealed by its massy platform, which was raised high in air above them, awaited, with almost breathless anxiety, the passing of the guard.

"Now, Perinet," muttered Bourdon, as the sound and lights of the men-at-arms gradually died away, "follow me with caution; and should we alarm the sentinel in crossing

the rampart, which Our Lady avert, turn quickly to your right—that angle of the tower will screen us.”

As he spoke, he grasped a small piece of iron that projected from the wall a little above his head, and, placing the point of his foot upon a broken piece of masonry, commenced ascending the inner side of the ditch. Perinet followed him in silence, and by various holds and resting-places, with which Bourdon seemed well acquainted, they arrived at the summit in a few minutes. But they were not yet safe. The chevalier crossed the top of the wall, and stood on the ramparts; and Perinet was about to do the same, when a piece of the coping yielded beneath the spring of his foot, and fell heavily into the fosse below, with a noise that echoed through every corner of the building. Seizing the armourer by the collar, Bourdon dragged him, with a powerful effort, on to the rampart, and they both darted behind the projecting turret, as the challenge of a sentinel proved the disturbance had not passed unnoticed; whilst the slow but gradual approach of daybreak rendered them almost visible to the guards who were posted at different commanding stations about the castle.

“*Qui vive?*” cried the chief of the *patrouille*, from the other end of the ramparts.

There was no answer.

“You cut out at every bush, sergeant,” said one of the guard.

“I am not yet quite so blind, Olivier,” returned the other, “as to be unable to distinguish a man at fifty paces, whether it be in the dark or not. I repeat I saw something move on the rampart.”

“Bah!” retorted the soldier addressed as Olivier, “and so did I. A cat, sergeant, a cat—nothing else. Who in the devil’s name would try to get this way into the château, when they might walk through the gates in another half hour?”

The sergeant returned no answer, but bent his glance in earnest attention towards the wood opposite, whose trees were becoming visible in the grey twilight of morning.

"I am not deceived this time, however," he exclaimed.

"Holla! *mes braves*, attention. It is barely clear enough to distinguish plainly, but I fancy I can descry a troop of horsemen advancing along the Paris avenue. Is it not so, Olivier?"

"There are two who keep some little distance before the others," replied the soldier, gazing keenly in the direction indicated. "And see, they are quitting their saddles!"

"They advance towards the château," said the sergeant.

"By my faith," exclaimed Olivier, "I should like to try whether I have strength enough to send a shaft against their doublets."

As he spoke he drew an arrow from his belt, and fitted its nick to the string of his bow.

"Hold your aim one instant," said the sergeant, arresting his arm. "*Qui vive?*"

"The king!" shouted a powerful voice from amongst the party.

At these magical words, in answer to the challenge of the guard, a new movement on the part of the wardens of the château took place. In an instant, the trumpets had sounded a salute; the chains of the drawbridge began to creak, as they slowly swung their massive burthen upon the platform of the opposite side; and the guards hastened down the flight of steps which led from the ramparts to the chief gate, crossed the fosse, and advanced to meet the royal cortège that approached.

At the head of the party were two persons, who, as the archer described, had quitted their horses, and were walking a little in advance of the main body. One of them was about fifty years of age, and bore the traces of a benevolent and expressive countenance, but his carriage was abject and stooping; and his eye, wild and unsettled, regarded every object with suspicion and distrust, as he leaned for support upon the arm of his companion. His features, too, were pale, very pale, and his limbs small and attenuated; indeed he appeared to walk with

painful difficulty. The other was about the same age but far different in appearance. His iron features and stern determined command of countenance, enabled him to carry his years with less symptoms of decline. His step was firm and resolute, and his general deportment that of one accustomed to command, and to have those commands obeyed. That they were persons of consequence was evident from the respect with which the sergeant of the guard received them. As the men-at-arms approached to learn their orders, the first-mentioned of these two personages uttered a cry of terror, and, darting from his companion, covered his eyes with his hands, as he cried out, in accents of extreme fear :

“ Save me ! my brother of Orleans, save me ! — it is the phantom ! ”

The other made a hurried sign to the sergeant, who immediately proceeded to withdraw his body of archers, equally astonished as his men at this singular exclamation.

“ You would have drawn your bow at a famous aim, Olivier,” whispered one of the soldiers to his fellow, as they receded.

“ Our lord the king would probably have been grateful for it,” was the retort. “ Save the mark — he is entirely mad, or the Comte D’Armagnac would never bring him to Vincennes at this time in the morning.”

The constable of France, whom the soldier mentioned by name, approached the personage he had just now supported, and who remained in the same terror-stricken position.

“ Monseigneur,” he said, in a low soothing tone, “ compose yourself, there is no phantom here.”

“ Ah ! D’Armagnac,” returned the king, for it was the unhappy Charles who spoke ; “ you did not see him then ? But he is gone now — quite gone.”

The king tottered as he spoke ; and the constable, seeing that he was about to fall, conducted him towards an aged tree, on whose mossy trunk he caused him to be seated. The hapless Charles gave him a look of mute

thanks ; and then pressing his hands against his temples, swayed his body backwards and forwards in unmeaning restlessness.

" You are suffering, monseigneur," said the constable.

" Oh, yes," replied Charles, without looking up, or removing his hands from his head. " It is here — all here. My brain burns, D'Armagnac. Let us wait a little—the moist air of the morning will refresh and cool it. It is a long, long time that I have thus suffered. When was I first ill ? " and he rubbed his hand vacantly across his forehead, as if to assist his recollection.

" You should drive away these sad remembrances, sire," rejoined the constable.

" I cannot, D'Armagnac ; I cannot," returned the king. " Ah ! now I recall to mind, it was in a forest — it was there that the phantom first appeared to me. I was on my way to wrest the assassin of Clisson from the Duc de Bretagne. Where is Louis d'Orleans ? I would see him."

" Do you not remember, monseigneur," said the constable, " that it is now ten years since your beloved brother was murdered in the Rue Barbette, by the same Duc Jean de Bourgogne, who is at this moment advancing in arms against his king ? "

Charles slowly raised his head, and fixed his eyes upon the constable, as he answered unconnectedly,

" You have — you have said that the English have landed upon our shores."

" It is true, sire," replied D'Armagnac.

" Where ? "

" At Touques, in Normandy. Bourgogne has already taken possession of Abbeville, Amiens, Montdidier, and Beauvais."

" Alas ! alas ! " exclaimed the king with anguish. " And what think you of doing, my cousin, to repulse these two enemies at once ? I name *you*, for I am too feeble now to assist you."

" Sire," replied D'Armagnac, " I have already taken measures for the purpose, which you have approved of.

You have also named the Dauphin Charles lieutenant-general of the kingdom."

"'Tis true," muttered the king. "But I told you also, constable, that he was too young; he is not yet fifteen. Why have you not rather given this office to his elder brother, Jean?"

"Sire!" exclaimed the comte, "is it possible that there are mental sufferings so great as to make a father forget the loss of his children? He is dead."

"Yes, yes," returned the king; "I remember—he died at our good town of Compiègne. Dead!" he continued, with mournful emphasis on the word; "Dead! It is the only echo that now replies when I call around me my children and relations. There is, then, only Charles to divide the command of the troops with you?"

"No other, sire, and if we had the money to raise new ones——"

"Have we not the funds reserved for the wants of the state?" interrupted the king.

"They have been consumed, sire," returned the comte.

"And by whom?" demanded the king eagerly. "Who has dared to appropriate them? It is either my wife or my son who have committed this theft—for theft it is—against the state. Alas! they look upon me as already dead."

"Sire," replied the wily D'Armagnac, "the Dauphin Charles is too respectful not to obey, whatever they may be, the orders of his father."

"Then you would say it is the queen!" exclaimed the monarch. "Well, we are about to see her; we will order her to restore it at once."

"It has been already dispersed, monseigneur," coldly returned the constable, "in the purchase of jewels and furniture for her boudoir."

"What then must be done?"

"We cannot tax the people again," replied D'Armagnac; "they murmur even now at the imposts. Sire," he proceeded with energy, "you are too lenient with the queen. She is ruining the kingdom, and before God it is yourself

that will answer for it. Has the public misery tended to diminish her extravagance? Far from it: on the contrary, it increases with the general distress. Her careless profusion causes even the wealthy families to grow discontented."

It was indeed a reckless and gallant court that Isabelle de Bavière kept at Vincennes, although, without the castle walls, all was gloom and distress. No expense was spared, no luxury omitted, to attach those who composed it to their mistress. According to the chronicler, "*les Seigneurs y étoient fort assidus, et les Dames fort libres*;" and as there appears to have been little secrecy observed in their gallantries, it was no wonder that the entire establishment passed, in the opinions of the country at large, as one not the best regulated in the world. And many handsome cavaliers preferred the attractions of high-born beauty and voluptuous indolence at Vincennes, to the political turmoil and varying contentions at Paris.

"It is too true, my cousin," said the king, in reply to D'Armagnac's forcible appeal; "we must try and turn her to our side, by according a favour she has long sued for. I have promised to appoint the Chevalier du Bois-Bourdon as governor of the château of Vincennes:—you may draw up his nomination for my signature."

"Have you really promised this, sire?" demanded the constable, as he cast his eyes towards the road leading from one of the side posterns of the castle, in the direction of Paris.

"I have, D'Armagnac," replied the king; "and I desire you to let this young man know the honour we have accorded him."

"It is probable he knows it already, sire," said the constable.

"Who has told him?" demanded the king quickly.

"She who demanded his nomination with so much energy."

"The queen!"

"The same, sire. She has so much confidence in the bravery of this young cavalier, that she has not even the

patience to wait for his commission as captain of Vincennes."

"How mean you?" asked Charles.

"Cast your eyes in the direction of that road," said D'Armagnac, indicating the route with his finger. — "Whom see you, monseigneur, now leaving the castle, and approaching us?"

"'Tis the Chevalier de Bourdon!" cried the king. "How has he been able to enter the castle thus early? The gates are not yet open. What say they of him at my court, constable?"

"That he is in great favour with the ladies" returned D'Armagnac; "and that not one has resisted his suit."

"Not *one*, Comte?" exclaimed the king.

"*None*, sire," replied the constable, with a voice full of emphasis and meaning.

As they were yet speaking, the object of their conversation came lightly up the avenue towards them, carelessly humming the burthen of a Languedocian romance. On perceiving the king, he slightly raised his hat; and then, without noticing the constable, or any others of his suite, re-covered his head, and continued his road in the direction of Paris.

"Constable!" cried the king, starting up, "Let that young man be arrested. He carries the colours of the queen, too, in his hood!"

"Provost of Paris!" exclaimed D'Armagnac to that functionary, who remained at the head of the guard in the back-ground, "the king wishes the Chevalier du Bois-Bourdon to be arrested. Follow and secure him."

The provost selected two men from the ranks, and hastened after the courtier, whilst the king sank back upon the mossy boll of the tree which formed his couch, in a fresh access of grief.

"Has she dared to push her audacity and insults thus far," he cried, "as to crush me in this manner? She has learnt to laugh at me — to jeer at my helpless condition, and she has taught others to do the same. Isabelle! Isabelle! I have not deserved this from you!" and

covering his face with his hands, he burst into a flood of tears.

"They have seized him, sire," said the constable, laying his hand on Charles's shoulder, and recalling him to the proceedings of the instant.

"We have no more business here, then," returned the king. "Come, my cousin, let us go back to Paris. You have led me here thus early, and it has been for a bitter purpose."

"And your orders, monseigneur?" asked D'Armagnac, as he summoned their horses, and prepared to return.

"The queen shall go to Tours, if she be culpable," answered the monarch. "We will try how she can fare without retinue or liberty."

"And the Chevalier du Bois-Bourdon?"

"To the torture, in the dungeons of the Grand Châtelet. *Allons*, my cousin, we will return."

The constable despatched a gentleman of the king's guard to the château with the royal mandate; and then, placing himself, with the unfortunate monarch, at the head of the escort, slowly and thoughtfully bent his horse's steps in the direction of Paris.

CHAP. III.

HOW PERINET STARTED ON THE QUEEN'S MISSION.

At the lower part of the turret, behind whose projection Bourdon and Perinet had concealed themselves upon alarming the guard, was a small door which conducted to the bottom of a flight of winding steps, and thence into the interior of the château. Pushing it gently, the door yielded, and the chevalier, accompanied by the young citizen, ascended the stairs with noiseless speed; resting only a few steps on their way, at one of the narrow loop-holes in the wall, to perceive that the falling masonry had, in reality, attracted the patrol towards the spot they had

just quitted. As they reached the top, Bourdon gave a few hurried directions to the armourer respecting the passages he was to follow ; then, wishing him good cheer, threw aside a piece of tapestry that covered the wall, and disappeared through a small panel which it concealed.

Left to himself, Perinet cautiously passed along a short corridor, in the main wall of the building ; and next descended a few steps, crossed a small passage running at right angles to the corridor, and entered the chapel of Vincennes. It was a beautiful gothic edifice, which had been erected during the reign of the preceding monarch ; and Perinet felt somewhat relieved when he found himself in a part of the château with whose locality he was not altogether unacquainted. The stained glass in the windows, nearly obscured what little light there was at present ; but two small lamps suspended over the altar, threw a glimmer around, and enabled him to direct his steps towards the farther extremity. As he crossed the main body of the chapel, treading as lightly as he could, lest the echoes of his footsteps should be heard by those in the vicinity, the low sound of voices fell upon his ear. They approached, and he had scarcely time to shrink into the angle that the last pillar made with the wall, when two figures crossed the aisle. One of these he immediately recognised as the chevalier Bourdon, and the other—he scarcely dared to presume that it was the queen ; and yet as they approached closely to where he was in ambush, he recognised the fine expressive features and noble figure of Isabelle de Bavière. One arm of the young courtier encircled her waist, and his other hand clasped her own. Her fine dark eyes were bent towards the ground, nearly concealed by their long lashes ; and her attitude was that of deep attention to his conversation, although the low tone in which he spoke prevented anything more than a few detached words from reaching the armourer. They passed slowly onwards, and finally quitted the chapel by the chief entrance.

Wonder and amazement for a few minutes drove every other thought from Perinet's mind. But as the increas-

ing daylight stole gradually over the grey columns and chequered pavement of the chapel, he again turned his attention to his appointment, and a fresh anxiety arose, as he recollected that the matins would commence ere long, and he must inevitably be discovered. But where was he to seek refuge? Marie had not kept her word, and he could not return by the way he had arrived, for that would expose him to certain detection. He called to mind that Bourdon and the queen had come from the extreme end of the chapel, and that he might find means of egress in that direction. Crossing over towards the altar, he discovered at its side a small secret door which was half opened. He passed through it, and closing it after him, found himself alone in the queen's oratory.

It was a small chamber, situated at the extremity of the chapel, and having only two doors, one of which communicated with Isabelle's own suite of apartments, and thence with the rooms of the château; the other being the panel by which he had entered. A window guarded with gilt iron bars, afforded a view of the ramparts and distant country below on the Paris side; and Perinet imagined it must have been the light from this point, which he had seen before he crossed the fosse. A valuable *priedieu*, and other religious articles, were ranged against the walls, and the furniture was of costly and luxurious fashion.

As Perinet regarded these objects with curious admiration, he was startled by the bell of the chapel sounding for early mass. In a few minutes after the secret door opened, and the queen hurriedly entered. She cast a rapid glance behind her as she closed the panel, and without seeing the armourer, went directly to the window, and gazed from it, with earnest attention, upon the courts below. It was a trying moment of suspense for Perinet. Aware that all escape was cut off, he resolved to make himself known, and trust to the queen's mercy for protection. Advancing towards the window, he threw himself at her feet, exclaiming: "Pardon, pardon, my gracious lady, that I am here!"

The queen shrieked as she perceived the armourer kneeling before her, and ran towards the panel as if to leave the oratory. In a moment, however, she returned, ejaculating in almost breathless accents: "A man in my oratory! how came you hither? Answer, I command you."

"Chance has directed me, madam," returned Perinet, rising; "a hazard which I curse, since it has drawn your anger upon me."

"It was *chance*, I presume, led you to Vincennes?" said the queen with a bitter sneer.

"I came, madame," replied Perinet, "to seek my affianced bride, and awaited but the opening of the gates to bear her away."

"Her name?" demanded Isabelle sternly.

"Marie," faltered Perinet.

"It is false!" exclaimed Isabelle; "Marie would not quit me."

"I call Our Lady to witness that I speak the truth, madame," was the reply.

"I can soon know, monsieur," said the queen, proceeding to the door of her apartment. "Marie!—I require your services."

At the summons, a fair girl of eighteen, in the costume of the queen's female attendants, entered the oratory from Isabelle's chamber. No sooner did she perceive the armourer, than, uttering a cry of astonishment, she rushed towards him, and threw herself into his arms.

"You know that man, then?" asked the queen. "Answer—his life depends on your word."

"Oh! madame," replied Marie, turning to the queen, "it is my betrothed—it is Perinet Leclerc, with whom I was about to fly from Vincennes this night. I could not meet him, for you ordered me to remain up all night in my chamber, saying that you might need my services. Pardon him, my queen, I implore you," she continued, falling on her knees, "or let me bear your anger."

"You wish to leave me, Marie?" said Isabelle. "What have I done to cause this?"

"It has been your kindness, madame, that prompted the action," replied Marie.

"How so, girl?"

"Because, madame," continued her fair attendant, "you know not why the constable has placed me here—you know not the mean office I was destined to fill after he took me from my home. A spy upon all your actions, I was expected to convey to him every sentiment that escaped your lips; but I swear to you, madame, he has drawn nothing from me. Watched by his people, it is two months that I have thus lived about you; and fearful of avowing the truth lest I should lose your confidence. You now know why I was anxious to leave you—at the risk of incurring your displeasure; but, at least, with the certainty of not having deserved it."

"Rise, *enfant*," said the queen, assisting her; "rise. You might have betrayed me—you did not, and I thank you. Now, Marie, I implore you to remain, as a service to myself; for another may succeed you who will not have your candour."

The poor girl looked with uncertainty towards Perinet, and returned no answer.

"You are fearful of quitting your sweetheart, Marie?" said the queen. "Well, I will take charge of him also. Perinet, will you consent to be squire to the Chevalier du Bois-Bourdon, as soon as he shall have the command of Vincennes? Will you be faithful to me also if I procure you this place?"

"Even to death, madame," responded the armourer fervently, as he raised a small iron cross to his lips.

"'Tis well," returned the queen. "You may look upon this favour as already granted. Marie!—retire, child, an instant: I would confer with your betrothed."

Her attendant withdrew to the window, and the queen proceeded in a low tone: "Perinet, remember—you have seen and heard *nothing* in the castle this morning; I keep by me a hostage of your fidelity. You now owe everything to me, and from this day you are in my service, body and soul."

"May Heaven punish me if I forget my duties!" returned the armourer.

"Madame!" cried Marie, from the recess of the window, "here are the king's guards in the court disarming our people. They arrest the Sieurs de Graville and de Giac!"

"What mean you, child?" exclaimed Isabelle, hurrying to the window.

"Look, madame," continued Marie; "Monsieur Dupuy, the evil spirit of the constable, crosses the court towards us—he ascends the staircase!"

"What can this mean?" muttered the queen, her countenance becoming deadly pale. "Perinet," she continued, "I demanded of you this instant a devotion to me without bounds, and already I am about to put it to the test."

"You may dispose of my life, madame, if it pleases you," returned the armourer. "It is yours—I have said it."

"Enter this closet," said the queen, leading him to the door. "If they see you here, you are lost; and you can yet serve me. Quick! quick! they are at hand!"

The armourer had scarcely concealed himself, when Dupuy entered the oratory from the state-apartments. He left the guards that accompanied him at the entrance of the chamber; and, advancing towards Isabelle, exclaimed:

"Madame the queen, I arrest you by the king's command!"

"Me!" ejaculated Isabelle; "it is impossible, or Charles has, indeed, lost all reason."

"And yet, madame," returned the other, "ten years ago, when the Duc d'Orleans dwelt here with you——"

"You have to arrest me," interrupted the queen hastily, "and your duty ends there. Moreover, monsieur, remember it is the custom to uncover your head before the queen."

"The Chevalier de Bourdon omitted to do so before the king," replied Dupuy, coldly removing his hat.

"When did this occur?" asked Isabelle.

"This morning, madame, at the gates of the château."

"The king is here, then!"

"He has left for Paris."

"And —— and Bourdon?" hesitated the queen.

"He is gone under good escort to the Châtelet," replied Dupuy.

"But they dare not touch him for an offence like that," said Isabelle hurriedly.

"I should not be here, madame, if he had only committed this one crime," said Dupuy calmly.

"Enough, sir," cried the queen. "Whither are you ordered to conduct me?"

"To the château at Tours, madame. The order of the king runs that you depart immediately, with one of your women."

"You may leave the room, monsieur," returned Isabelle.

"I shall be ready to follow you in a few minutes."

"Remember, madame, that you must depart without delay," said Dupuy.

"Remember, sir, that I am your queen, and that I have ordered you to quit this oratory," retorted Isabelle, gazing at him with flushed cheek and angry eye.

Dupuy slowly withdrew, murmuring a few unintelligible words as he departed. No sooner had he left the chamber, than Marie closed the door, and then quickly proceeded to liberate Perinet from the closet. The queen could disguise her emotions no longer, but sinking down on a fauteuil, covered her face with her handkerchief, and burst into tears.

"You are a prisoner, then, madame?" asked Perinet, after a few minutes' agitating pause.

"Oh, it is not myself I care for," returned Isabelle; "it is the Chevalier Bourdon that we must preserve."

"Can we save him, madame?" said Perinet. "I have many devoted friends who would risk their lives for me, as twenty times I have risked mine for them. We will attack the Châtelet."

"And think you to save him by those means!" exclaimed the queen. "After you have shattered twelve doors of iron, and, arrived at his dungeon, find nothing but a senseless corpse, you will have saved him! It would

but hasten his death. Perinet, on your life, do not attempt that plan."

"Can you recommend aught else?" asked the armourer.

"I have gold," returned Isabelle. "I am rich — I am the queen. Go to his prison, and say to those who guard it, 'Kill him not; here is gold — gold enough to render you all wealthy — to purchase a kingdom if you wished it, but kill him not. And if this is not sufficient, she has, besides plate and jewels — the very pearls of her crown! — Take all; she will give you all; she will even owe you still, — but kill him not.' Alas!" she continued, wringing her hands, "if I could see those dreadful men for one instant, I could obtain all I want."

"I will obey you, madame," returned Perinet, touched at her keen distress.

"Oh, I am mad," cried the queen rapidly, "mad to think that I could buy his life. No — they would not take my blood in exchange for Bourdon's. Fool that I have been, when on the approach of the king's delirium I might have demanded anything from him; even the head of D'Armagnac! What can be done?"

"My dear mistress!" exclaimed Marie, weeping, "take comfort, we implore you. Even I must be separated from Perinet."

"His absence will not be for ever, Marie," replied the queen. "You will see him again. But for me! — I loved Bourdon as you love Perinet, and they are about to kill him! Do you hear, Marie? — to *kill* him, without my being able to do aught to save his life! Even now he may be struggling beneath the horrors of the torture, and I am not there to breathe a word of hope or courage in his ear! I am not there to kiss his pale lips, or wipe the clammy dews of agony from his noble forehead!"

"It is, indeed, most terrible!" ejaculated Marie.

"And never to know his fate!" continued the queen, in the same tone. "Never! — It is a word that falls sad and chill upon the heart of one that loves. But you are free, Perinet. You have heard they have taken him to the Grand Châtelet, and there must be your station also. You

must not quit it for an instant; and if he leaves it dead or alive, you must come and tell me ;—do you hear ?”

“ You may depend on me, madame,” replied the armourer.

“ They have closed the gates of the château,” said the queen, rising and going to the window. “ You can escape by this gallery ; it opens on the fosse, where you can descend ; and when you are out of all danger, on the road to Paris, wave your scarf. I shall not depart from this window until I see it.”

“ Have you any other commands, madame ?” asked Perinet.

“ None—yet, stay,” returned the queen ; “ whatever may happen, you must let me know. If you cannot come near me, you must send me your cross, if he is alive ; and your poinard, if he is dead, Now go ; and our Lady bless you !”

The armourer pressed his betrothed to his heart ; and then, with a respectful salutation to the queen, quitted the apartment.

“ All my hope is in his adventure, Marie,” said Isabelle, as her messenger departed. “ It is the sole chance they have left me. *O mon Dieu !* save and avenge me.”

She knelt for a few seconds before the crucifix, and then rose to take her station at the window.

“ How slow he is in passing along the gallery !” she exclaimed. “ What can have occurred to stop him ? Ah ! he is on the rampart, and approaches the fosse.”

“ Are there any sentinels on the turrets, madame ?” asked Marie.

“ One only ; — he orders him to stop !”

“ And what does Perinet ?”

“ He pursues his journey. Ha ! the man-at-arms threatens to shoot him ! He raises his arbalest ; he discharges it !”

Marie uttered a faint cry as the audible jar of the cross-bow reached the oratory.

“ It is nothing, girl,” cried the queen ; “ he has not even turned his head. He is a brave young man, and God will

protect him. He descends the rampart. I cannot see him more."

Whilst she was yet speaking, Dupuy and his guards re-entered the oratory. Fortunately, however, they had heard nothing of the conversation, and were unacquainted with the cause of the queen's anxiety.

"It is time to depart, madame," said he, with stern emphasis.

"No, no, not yet," hurriedly replied the queen. "I cannot leave yet; nay, I will not."

"By will or by force, madame, you must come," returned the officer.

"By force!" exclaimed Isabelle, as she twisted her white arm amongst the iron bars of the window. "Let me now see who will dare to lay a finger upon me!"

"You are no longer queen; you are my prisoner!" said Dupuy.

"Holy Virgin!" muttered Isabelle to Marie, "he appears not yet!"

"For the last time, madame, will you accompany me?" asked the commandant.

"Saved! saved!" cried the queen, unable to suppress her joy, as she descried Perinet's scarf fluttering in the park. "He has escaped, Marie!"

"In the name of the king, seize that female!" cried Dupuy to the guards.

Two or three of the men-at-arms advanced towards the casement. The queen left it; and waving them back with her hand, exclaimed, as she drew up her fine figure to its full height:

"Arrière tous! my place is at your head, messieurs."

The guards, and even Dupuy himself, fell back on each side with respect, as Isabelle and Marie passed through their ranks, and quitted the apartment.

CHAP. IV.

OF MASTER BOURDICHON — OF HIS WIFE ; AND OF THE
EMEUTE RAISED BY THE SCHOLARS OF CLUNY.

THOSE who are acquainted with modern Paris would recognize in the present Place du Châtelet—in the elegant Fountain of the Palm-tree which adorns its centre—and in the Pont au Change which conducts to it from the Marché aux Fleurs, on the opposite side of the Seine, little of the appearance it presented at the commencement of the fifteenth century. The grim and frowning walls of the prison of the Grand Châtelet, so aged and time worn that their very origin is lost in antiquity, then rose in sullen strength at the foot of the Pont aux Meuniers, a bridge lower down the stream, and, in consequence, nearer the Louvre than the other, no longer existing. Both these thoroughfares were, at that time, in common with the two others, (for the Pont Neuf was not yet erected,) covered with unsightly and lumbering wooden houses. The open space in front of the dungeon branched off into the Rue de la Serpente, the Rue Savonnerie, which conducted to the Grève, by the Pont Nôtre Dame, in the line of the modern Quai Pelletier, and several other streets, only known to have existed by the mention of their names in the old chronicles.

On the day of the events described in the preceding chapter, the banks of the Seine, and the area before the Châtelet, presented a very bustling and animated appearance. Bateliers in the gayest coloured doublets of blue and red were busily arranging scaffoldings and standing places of tubs and planks, in every corner that afforded space for their contrivances. The Taverne du Porc Epic displayed a goodly and shining row of bright pewter vessels and dishes, and the servants were in their best attire, placing small tables and settles in front of the door, and in the balconies, or exhibiting the choicest viands in the

most attractive forms, to invite customers : the houses had their windows adorned with various gaudy pieces of carpet and tapestry, some nailed to the sills, and others floating as banners, on which the arms of the constable were everywhere conspicuous : the city guards were occupied in superintending the erection of barriers at the ends of the different streets ; and a large and mingled body of workmen, bourgeois, soldiers, students, and loiterers of every class and description, gave a stirring appearance to the various preparations.

But there was one person in the crowd so indefatigably active, that he appeared to be in every part of the jostling multitude at once, apparently doing nothing, but uttering endless orders and suggestions, to which nobody attended. He was a small pinched-up man, about five and forty years of age, with a most quaint oddity of countenance and general appearance, to which his attire in no small degree contributed. He wore the ordinary sad-coloured jerkin and grey hose of the middle classes of his city, but over these he had donned a bright corslet of the *garde bourgeoise*, evidently too large for him : as was the helmet which adorned, or rather disfigured, his comic-looking head. In his hand he carried an immense halberd ; and a sword, nearly as long as he was tall, dangled and trailed at his heels, perpetually throwing him down, to the great amusement of the spectators who chanced to be near him when such an accident occurred. At last, in his anxiety to assure himself that a standing had been properly fixed, he slipped, and rolled completely off it, coming down, all at once, upon the shoulders of a citizen, who chanced to pass at the moment — a grave and elderly man, whose dress bespoke him a *quartinier*, or magistrate of his quarter.

“ May the pest seize you for a clumsy idiot ! ” was the salute that greeted him.

The little man scrambled on his hands and feet, and with great difficulty and much trepidation arose.

“ I ask a million pardons, messire,” he gasped out.

" Ah! Master Leclerc, is it you? I am glad it is no one else, or I might have fared worse; how is it you are not gone to walk in the procession?"

" I have just left it," returned the other.

" And I am about to join it; for, as one of the citizen guard, it is part of my duty."

" Well; tarry an instant, man. Hola! taverner, a flagon of your best wine. Come, Master Bourdichon, be seated."

" May St. Babolin, my patron, return your treat tenfold!" said the bourgeois, as he drew a stool towards him. " Here's your health, *compère*," he continued, taking the flagon from the taverner, and filling a cup. " Here's your health, and that of your son, Perinet — a great fool who wishes to marry after seeing *my* ménage! Dear! dear! Dame Bourdichon will be the death of me one of these fine days!"

" Still always quarrelling?" said his companion.

" Forsooth! what else can we do?" was the reply. " Ever since I allowed my little Marie to leave us, my wife has become a Bourguignian, out of hatred to the constable; and since I am a follower of the other party, you perceive why we so often come to blows. I am ashamed to confess the Armagnacs had not the best of it just now. Fortunately, however, two or three of the scholars of Cluny came up, and restored the equilibrium between us."

" By my faith, Master Bourdichon," said the taverner, who had listened with much entertainment to the confession, " I congratulate you on your deliverance from your wife's clutches."

" It is not often that happens," returned Bourdichon, removing his helmet with some trouble, and scratching his head; " but look you, Master Jacques; you must know that by way of rejoicing for the triumph of our cause — that is to say, in joy for the arrest of the queen (who is gone this morning, as I hear, under good escort, to Tours), I have sent you my white goose — oh! a glorious goose,

that I have fattened for five years past, to eat on some fête-day."

"The day cannot be better chosen," observed the taverner.

"Well, out of love for D'Armagnac, and hatred for my wife, whom Beelzebub elope with as soon as he pleases! I mean to eat my goose to-day with some friends; and Master Leclerc will, I trust, join us?"

"I thank you, messire," replied the échevin; "but in these times of disorder I cannot quit the Porte St. Germaine, of which you know I have kept the keys for twenty years. And, by the way, I have already been absent a long time. *Au revoir*, Master Bourdichon," he continued, as he rose to depart, "if you see aught of Perinet, send him to me."

His companion watched him as he retreated over the narrow thoroughfare of the Pont aux Meuniers, and then quietly emptied the remaining contents of the flagon into his own cup, preparatory to again putting on his helmet, and taking his place at the corner of one of the streets.

But during this conversation, the crowd had increased; and every practicable spot upon the line by which the cortège was expected to pass, had its occupant. The windows of the various houses, as far as the eyes could reach, were filled with spectators, even to the very coping; and a dense mass of living beings was wedged together behind each barrier, beguiling the time with endless squabbles, or amusing themselves with bandying jokes from one to the other at the expense of the sentinels who kept them within bounds. Along the irregular frontage of the wooden dwellings on the bridge, a similar assembly had collected; and the distant towers of the Palais de Justice were alike crowned with gazers, whilst the small streets in every direction presented nothing but one uniform sea of heads, that swayed perpetually backwards and forwards. A small portion of the scholars had appropriated to themselves, without permission, the ledges over the different shops, where they perched themselves swinging their legs about over the heads of the people below, and keeping up

an incessant war of *argot* and impertinence with the crowd ; but the majority were unwilling to leave the attractions of the wine-cup, and formed numerous groups round the different tables at the tavern, which being placed behind the barriers were comparatively out of the pressure of the multitude.

The patience of the assembly was becoming somewhat exhausted (which was not unreasonable, considering the very uncomfortable positions they were mostly placed in), when a banner was seen above the heads of the mob at the end of the Rue de la Serpente, and the sound of distant acclamations arose, in which the name of D'Armagnac was distinctly audible.

"The procession approaches!" cried a hundred voices at once.

"No, no, my masters," shouted the taverner, who had climbed to the top of a high post that formed the standard of one of the barriers ; "it is the constable on his way to meet it. Noël! Noël!"

The loudest acclamations arose as D'Armagnac entered the place, surrounded by his archers. So long as they made a noise, the mob cared not whom they cheered, and he was greeted on all sides with shouts of welcome.

"Messieurs!" he exclaimed, moving his hat, "keep your acclamations and welcomes for the king. I need not say how gratified I feel to see the people of his good city of Paris thus favourably disposed towards his friends. Let no fear of persecution mar the festivities of to-day, for the arrest of Isabelle de Bavière will not be a signal for persecution. The king has promised an amnesty to all partisans of the queen, who will return to their proper duty ; and the functionaries of the city, whose *cortège* you await, will confirm it."

Fresh cries of triumph arose as D'Armagnac concluded. Then turning to the captain of his guard, he gave him some directions in an undertone, and entered the Châtelet.

It is not to be presumed that Master Bourdichon had remained silent during these lively demonstrations of welcome to the chief of his party. On the contrary, he had

fixed a scarf to the top of his halberd, and was waving it and cheering at the top of his strength, when an amazonian-looking female burst through the crowd, and instantly levelled the banner to the ground; a process which she followed up by bestowing divers sound cuffs on the neck of its owner, being the only unguarded part below his casque, to the infinite delight of the bystanders. "So!" she exclaimed at each blow; "so! you cry Noël to the constable, do you?"

"*Miséricorde!*" cried the luckless bourgeois; "it is my wife!"

Roars of laughter arose on all sides at this avowal.

"Oh, laugh — pray laugh, my masters!" said Bourdichon ruefully. "And may Satan give you a similar help-mate — that is to say, if he can form so perfect a *chef-d'œuvre* again!"

A few more cuffs and shakes from his wife were the reward of his speech.

"Mark her injustice!" cried the unfortunate pewterer. "This is because I welcome the constable at the moment he is announcing a pardon to all the queen's followers."

"Pardon!" screamed his infuriated partner. "Is it to pardon him, that they have brought a prisoner into the Grand Châtelet this morning?"

"Bah!" ejaculated the taverner, who, perched on the summit of the post, thought himself privileged to contradict Madame Bourdichon. "Who told you that lie?"

"Who told me?" continued the dame, fiercely turning towards the speaker. "Tassin Caillard, the dyer, saw them all pass."

"*Eh bien!*" retorted the taverner. "I'll wager that the constable has gone into the Châtelet expressly to pardon the prisoner."

"Do you call those angels of mercy?" cried Madame Bourdichon, pointing to the dungeon, at whose gate two closely muffled persons were waiting for admission.

"*Sainte Vierge!*" ejaculated Bourdichon; "the tormentor and the physician! And the door of the Châtelet opens of itself, as if it knew them."

"And shuts of itself," added his wife, "to keep the shrieks and curses of the prisoner from reaching our ears. I shall go and learn the particulars, if I can get in."

"Enter the Châtelet!" cried another woman in amazement.

"And why not?" asked the shrew. "I know La Cochette, the gaoler's daughter, and she will tell me. If I find it is a Bourguignian they are torturing, my husband shall pay for it."

Thus speaking, she turned towards the Châtelet, giving her spouse a contemptuous push, that sent him sprawling amongst the crowd, armour and all. Fresh shouts of laughter arose at his new discomfiture, and some of the students left their tables to ascertain the cause of the merriment.

"By all the saints!" cried one, "it is the luckless bourgeois we so valiantly rescued this morning from his wife's claws!"

"The same, messires," answered Bourdichon, scrambling up again upon his legs.

"He is still very agitated," continued the scholar, smiling. "Descend from your post, Master Taverner, and give us some wine to refresh him."

"And cards," cried another, as they reseated themselves. "I would know something about this new invention to please our mad monarch. What are they, Jehan?"

"Small pictures," returned the first speaker, "to which different value is attached by circumstances. Grignonneur, the painter, claims some credit for his ingenuity; let us drink his health."

"I can see the banners floating in the air," cried a scholar from one of the balconies: "they are approaching."

"Then I must bid you farewell, my masters," said Bourdichon, rising, before he had tasted his first cup, "for I must join them. Keep your places, and you will see me pass."

The distant sound of the drums and trumpets foretold that the procession was at hand; and before long, the pikes of the advanced guard entered the place. The im-

mense crowd again resumed their standings ; Jacques, the taverner, climbed up the pole once more ; and as the different grave personages arrived, who composed the cortège, he saluted them with respect, or indicated their names and offices to the multitude. In the middle of the excitement and confusion, Dame Bourdichon reappeared at the gate of the Châtelet.

“ Room for messieurs the councillors of the Grand Chamber ! ” cried Jacques.

“ Noël,” responded the people as the functionaries passed.

“ Room for Dame Bourdichon, who seeks her husband,” continued the sly taverner.

Great merriment prevailed, as the portly dame elbowed her way through the crowd, and dragging a mechanic from the bench he occupied, coolly took possession of his place.

“ Welcome to the procureur du Roi ! ” proceeded Jacques, as that individual was greeted with fresh acclamations.

“ Ay, shout your throats dry,” cried Dame Bourdichon, “ until you get them cut ! — a time not far off.”

“ What do you mean, mother ? ” asked Jehan the scholar.

“ Mean ! — that in the Châtelet, at the present moment, they are torturing a handsome young man. I heard his cries as they plugged his feet into iron boots with mallets and wedges ! ”

“ Horror ! ” cried several of the by-standers. “ Is it true ? Do you know his name ? ”

“ No,” continued the dame ; “ but I think I could perceive through the chinks of the door that he wore a scholar’s robe — that of Cluny.”

“ A scholar of Cluny ! ” ejaculated Jehan, rising. “ Tête-Dieu ! attend here, you others.”

“ Are you sure of this, madame ? ” inquired a woman, in an under tone.

“ I am not, Dame Jacquemine,” she answered ; “ but if they hear it is one of their own party, they will get up a disturbance with the citizen guard, and beat my husband.

— Look you, young men," she continued to the scholars, in a loud voice, " the smoke issuing from yonder chimney of the Châtelet, arises from the fire where they redden the pincers and irons of torture ; and all this is going on whilst these men in scarlet and black robes are on their way to congratulate the king."

" You are right, dame," cried Jehan, mounting on one of the tables. " Down with the cortége !" he shouted. " Down with the tyrants that would torture the scholars of Cluny !"

With the swiftness of lightning did the war-cry of the scholars run from one to another, and speedy was the effect produced. In an instant, the majority of them had assembled round their ringleader ; and those over the shops dropped down, unhesitatingly, on the heads of the crowd below, and fought their way to the front of the tavern, crushing in the barrier, and breaking down all before them.

" Flagons and goblets for the functionaries of Paris !" shouted Jehan, launching a massy cup at the procession.

" What are you about to do ?" cried the taverner, fearful for his property, as he rapidly descended from his station. " Bourgeois ! to my aid !"

" Artificers !" shouted Jehan, " assist the scholars. If they commence with the robes of the students, they will not be long in reaching the pourpoints of the mechanics — the torturer does not soon stop when he once begins. At the cortége ! Seize the benches — the barriers — anything ! *A bas ! A bas le cortége !*"

A crowd of people, excited by the hurried address of the scholar, immediately surrounded him, and then the riot commenced. Grasping everything they could lay their hands upon, and at the same time partially sheltered by the barriers in front, they cast a shower of missiles at the functionaries and their attendants. In vain the taverner, supported by a few of the citizens, threatened, swore, and implored them to desist by turns. It was of no use ; and his bright cups and tankards, together with his chairs and tables, were flying in all directions.

" Bravo, *mes braves*," cried Jehan ; " down with them !"

down with the torturers! Close the chains of the Quai. We are safe here—they cannot hurt us if they would.”

“Messurs,” cried the taverner, appearing at his first-floor window, “I entreat your forbearance.”

“Down with the taverner!” shouted Jehan, hurling a wooden platter at his head, with so delicate an aim that it caused him to descend immediately.

“*Vrai Dieu!* companions,” cried another scholar, “there is a reinforcement.”

“On the Pont aux Meuniers,” answered the scholar, pointing to a man who was crossing it in haste. “It is Perinet Leclerc!”

A shout of exultation burst from the collegians, as the armourer, pale and breathless, rapidly descended the bridge, and joined their party.

“Our Lady aids us!” exclaimed Jehan, “for Perinet is ours, hand and heart.”

“I have seldom refused to join you, my learned masters,” returned Perinet eagerly, “but to-day I am not my own master. Neither my head nor my arm is at my own disposal.”

“And yet we have strange need both of one and the other,” responded Jehan. “You must aid us to save a brother from the torture in the Châtelet.”

“A scholar!” muttered Perinet; “if it should be he! But how can we accomplish it?” he added aloud.

“By beating the bourgeois guard,” cried dame Bourdichon, never forgetful of her husband, from the interior of a neighbouring shop, whither the first tumult had driven her.

“And by storming the Châtelet!” exclaimed the students.

“You cannot do it, *mes enfans*,” said the armourer. “Storm the Châtelet! the old Châtelet, that is built of stone so hard, you might work at it all day without hollowing out a gap to hide the shortest of your daggers! No, no, trust to my counsel—”

“We do not want counsel,” interrupted Jehan impa-

tiently ; "but an arm that can make a breach in a wall, or the head of an archer : take care of your own, Perinet, if you are a coward."

"Right, Jehan, right !" cried the students, turned by every new impulse. "Away with the mechanic — down with the Armourer !"

"Stand back !" ejaculated Perinet, shaking off a couple who had seized his pourpoint ; and drawing his sword, "here is my place," he continued, clinging with his left arm to the post that had formed the observatory of the taverner. "Here is my place, and I will not leave it until it be well stained with my own blood."

The students advanced *en masse* towards him, and the consequences of his boldness might have proved fatal, when the alarm was given that the archers were advancing along the Quai, and their arrival in the place directly afterwards, changed the fortune of the contest.

"Scholars, citizens, and mechanics," cried the officer, "I order you in the name of the king, and the Comte d'Armagnac, to leave this place."

"Down with the constable !" exclaimed a woman's voice from a shop.

"Down with the archers !" responded the scholars, retreating behind their barricades.

The guard advanced, like a body of iron, against the rioters. The scholars, being unprovided with weapons, were unable to cope with the pikes and halberds of the soldiers, and after greeting them with a shower of projectiles, retreated in all directions, with the exception of Perinet, who had concealed himself behind the corner of one of the barricades, anxious not to quit the neighbourhood of the Châtelet ; and the taverner, who was alternately lamenting and collecting the fragments of his property.

"Hola ! master citizen," cried the officer to a member of the guard, who was crossing the place towards the tavern. "We have need of your services as a sentinel on the Pont aux Meuniers."

"I am engaged, sir archer," was the reply.

"'Tis no business of mine," returned the soldier.

“Take your halberd and guard the foot of the bridge, until they come to relieve you, with the consign to disperse all loiterers.”

The citizen shouldered his weapon with an ill grace, and walked to the spot, muttering, “Confound the consign! Here am I hungry enough to eat all my goose myself, and have nothing to gnaw but an old halberd.”

Whereupon master Bourdichon, for it was he, began to pace up and down the limits of his walk, in extreme anger.

An hour passed by in painful suspense on the part of Perinet, who still remained behind the barrier, fearful of attracting the notice of any of the archers who from time to time approached the Châtelet. On his way from Vincennes in the morning, he had engaged a boatman to await his signal below the parapet that bordered the river, and in the event of any news of Bourdon, to convey it to the queen. The person he had employed in this service was a tried friend, whom Perinet had served in like manner on many former occasions; and he became anxious, lest suspicion should be roused by his loitering on the river so long, in the vicinity of the Châtelet, and thus destroy the only means he could rely upon, of sending his intelligence to Isabelle. Nor was master Bourdichon in the best of possible moods. The thoughts of his roast goose, which his friends might be even at that time devouring, kept him in a perpetual worry. “If I could only see them,” thought he, “it would be some consolation.” To effect this purpose, he placed his halberd on the ground, and, first carefully looking round to make sure he was not observed, mounted the parapet of the Quai, and gazed with intense longing towards the tavern. This movement was not lost upon Perinet, and he determined to profit by it. He left his hiding-place, and advanced boldly towards the citizen.

“Who goes there?” cried Bourdichon, leaping hurriedly from the wall, and snatching up his halberd. “Halloo! is it you, Perinet? what do you want here?”

“I have come to relieve you,” returned the armourer;

"and as a proof, I will tell you the consign ; it is to disperse all loiterers."

"You are right," returned Bourdichon, in eager haste. "Here, take my dagger and my halberd. Perinet, if my wife should come this way, remember the consign — do not let her loiter about in the neighbourhood."

"I will recollect it," answered Perinet, half smiling at the joy of the bourgeois to be released. "Now, you are at liberty, and God speed you."

Before he had well finished speaking, Bourdichon was across the street, and immediately after hurried into the tavern, leaving the armourer on duty, and alone.

CHAP. V.

HOW BOURDON LEFT THE CHÂTELET ; AND HOW PERINET SENT HIS CROSS TO QUEEN ISABELLE, AND RECEIVED ANOTHER IN ITS PLACE.

THE day wore on. The heavy chimes from the Tour d'Horloge marked the approach of evening, which the gathering shadows around the high close buildings of the Pont aux Meuniers confirmed, and still Perinet kept his watchful guard upon the Quai. Few people were abroad, for the uproar of the morning had driven the more timid of the inhabitants within their doors ; and the guards, who had been posted at all the places of public resort, prevented the assembling of any loiterers within range of their arbalests. One or two stragglers who dwelt upon the bridge had recognised Perinet, but without any particular feeling of suspicion that he was acting for another ; on the contrary, they believed him to have been ordered to the station, from the first, being himself a citizen.

By degrees, all was quiet, and lights appeared one by one in the windows of the different houses, together with a few dim and straggling lamps which started out gradually from the obscurity of the Quai. As the curfew from

the distant bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois—that fatal bell which nearly two centuries afterwards rang out the knell of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Eve—noted the progress of the evening, the suspense of Perinet became most acute. Every time he approached the parapet of the river wall in his walk, he cast an anxious glance at the swift current below, in the hope of discovering some trace of his messenger: and each time was he disappointed. At length, worn out in mind and spirits, he was about to quit his post, heedless of discovery, and return home, when he heard his name pronounced in a low tone, and directly afterwards a man's head appeared above the parapet.

“Gervais—my faithful Gervais! is it you?” cried Perinet, casting his halberd to the ground, and rushing towards him. “What has thus delayed your approach?”

“I could not come before dusk,” replied the boatman; “there have been sentinels posted along the whole river bank.”

“And your boat?”

“Is below, at the nearest pier of the bridge.”

“’Tis well,” observed Perinet, as he distinguished the small craft tossing about in the eddy of the arch. “Descend into it, and remain immediately below where I now stand until I throw you down the cross—if it be the cross I am to send, which our Lady grant!”

“And when I have got it?” inquired Gervais.

“Take your oars,” replied Perinet emphatically, “and, whatever betide, stop not on your course until you are clear of the city. This achieved, seek the Queen Isabelle, wherever she may be—whether at Tours or Vincennes you must gain an interview with her; be she in a dungeon or a palace, say to her, ‘Perinet sent me,’ and your mission will be accomplished.”

“It shall be done,” exclaimed Gervais, as he prepared to descend the Quai.

“Take also this purse,” rejoined Perinet; “it will shorten your journey, and the queen is impatient. Be careful,” he continued as he mounted the parapet to watch

the boatman's descent. "Draw your boat to the last ring in the wall below, and sit there with your knife in readiness to cut the rope."

But whilst this short dialogue was taking place, the doors of the Châtelet were opened, and D'Armagnac, who had been within its walls since noon, appeared, followed by a few of his archers. An ill-disguised smile of triumph played over his sinister features, as he folded up a parchment which he held in his hand, and deposited it beneath his cuirass. Then, pausing an instant, to allow time for his guards, who were bearing torches, to precede him, the whole party moved towards the Pont aux Meuniers. The armourer had been so occupied with his instructions to Gervais, that he had not perceived the constable's approach; and having seen everything in readiness, turned round to regain his post, when he came full face to D'Armagnac, who was about to cross the bridge. At the same moment the door of the tavern opened, and Jacques, Bourdichon, and a few citizens, anxious to avail themselves of the protection of the constable's guard on their way home, came out with torches, casting a bright light on the Quai, and area in front of the Châtelet.

"What do you here?" cried D'Armagnac, as Perinet nearly leaped upon him from the wall.

"I am the sentinel," returned the armourer, confused and startled at the sudden appearance of the other party.

"And your halberd?"

Perinet returned no answer; he had left the weapon on the ground in his anxiety to see Gervais, and a captain of the guard now produced it. The armourer folded his arms and regarded the constable in anxious silence, as the revellers from the Porc Epic thronged round him in amazement.

"So, messieurs," exclaimed D'Armagnac sternly; "you are trusted with the safety of the city, and 'tis thus you fulfil your duty! Let one of you take this young man's place."

"Take this halberd, sir," said the captain, giving the weapon to Bourdichon, who chanced to be the nearest, and

received it with the worst grace in the world, mumbling that he was fated to guard the bridge that night. "The others," continued the officer, "may depart."

"No," ejaculated D'Armagnac; "let them remain. I am about to teach them a lesson, which will render them more vigilant in future."

The citizens stared, and looked towards each other with inquiring glances, but Perinet still maintained the same calm position. "If they kill me," thought he, "how will Isabelle know the fate of Bourdon?" and in this doubt were all his anxieties comprised.

"Henri and Philippe," cried D'Armagnac to two of his archers, "draw your swords!"

There was a movement of terror on the part of the bystanders, but not a muscle of Perinet's face stirred.

"Lay your blades on the ground," continued the constable, "and strike eight blows with the sheaths upon the fellow's shoulders."

The red blood rose in Perinet's face at the order. He started from the calm attitude he had assumed, and exclaimed in a hurried manner, to the constable:

"Monseigneur, this is the punishment of a soldier, and I am a citizen."

D'Armagnac appeared to take no notice of the armourer's appeal, but coldly uttered:

"Let it be done as I have ordered."

"It is the punishment of a serf—of a vassal," resumed Perinet, "and I am neither!"

"It is more fitted for you," returned D'Armagnac, "since it thus touches you to the heart."

"Reflect, monseigneur," continued Perinet sternly, throwing off the two archers, who advanced to seize him, and grasping the arm of the constable: "reflect before you commit this degradation upon me; I would not pardon such an outrage, even from the king himself. Persist, and I swear not to rest day or night, until I am avenged!"

"I am not accustomed to heed either threats or supplications, when my orders have once gone forth," pro-

ceeded the constable, as he perceived several of the citizens in conference. "Give this man eight blows with the scabbards of your swords; and let them be bestowed in a manner that will cause him to recollect the constable for some time."

"We cannot suffer it," murmured a citizen; "he is, like us, a bourgeois."

"What is this, my masters?" demanded the constable fiercely. "Do you grumble? Let me see which of you will dare to rescue this man from the hands of my archers!"

The guard closed round the prisoner, as D'Armagnac spoke, and one of them proceeded to divest him of his upper garments. Perinet offered no opposition, but pale with rage and emotion, remained fixed as a statue, and biting his under-lip until the blood trickled down his chin. At a word from the constable, two men placed themselves on either side of the armourer, and prepared to strike him alternately on his naked shoulders, with their scabbards. D'Armagnac gave a sign, and the punishment commenced. At the first blow, a convulsive tremor ran over Perinet's frame; but it was not that of suffering. Although a crimson stripe across his back followed every blow, he started not, but with dilated nostril and knitted brows, kept his eye fixed upon D'Armagnac, gleaming with the fire of vengeance, until the account was completed, when his head sank upon his breast, and he faintly ejaculated, "I am degraded!"

"Let him go, now," cried the constable, as the eighth blow was struck. "It is the soldier I have punished, not the citizen. And be mindful, my masters," he added, turning to the bourgeois, "whichever of you shall thus quit his post, I will mark upon his shoulders the most noble red cross of Burgundy he can conceive, as I have done upon this man."

"I swear to God," muttered Perinet between his teeth, "that you shall bear the sign also, *and I never yet was known to break my word!*"

The threat passed unheeded by the constable; the

archers, throwing the armourer's garments carelessly at his feet, again formed into rank, and D'Armagnac left the Place, followed by the citizens, except Bourdichon, who remained on duty.

For some time after their departure, Perinet continued standing with his arms folded in the same fixed attitude. Aroused, at length, by the pain which the cold air caused to his wounds, he gathered up his vest and pourpoint, and threw them carelessly over his bleeding shoulders. In so doing, his dagger fell from one of the pockets upon the ground. He picked it up eagerly, and examined the point.

"My tried companion!" he ejaculated; "they did not then seize thee! Thou hast now one more service than before to render me!"

Not caring to attract the attention of Bourdichon, who was keeping guard at his former post upon the bridge, Perinet silently resumed his old station behind the barrier, which had served to break the pressure of the crowd during the day. Again all was quiet in the Place. A few stars were twinkling in the heavens, but not sufficient to afford any light; whilst the few scattered cressets which the wind permitted to remain unextinguished, were too far distant to be of the least service. Thus screened from observation, the armourer once more awaited the tidings he might hear of Bourdon's fate.

As the last stroke of ten died away in echoes amongst the pointed towers of the Palais de Justice, the portal of the Grand Châtelet slowly opened, and three soldiers appeared on the threshold. The first of these carried a torch; and by its glare he directed the steps of the other two, who were staggering under the weight of a large burthen which they carried between them. From his ambush Perinet could observe all that passed, and he was horrified at perceiving the envelope stained with large clots of blood. The men passed slowly across the Place, and then, halting at the very barrier behind which Perinet was concealed, sent their torch-bearer forward to exchange the pass-word with Bourdichon, who still remained on the bridge. As they dropped their load with some force upon the ground,

a deep low groan issued from the sack. Perinet heard it, and it struck an icy terror to his soul. Firmly grasping his dagger, he glided noiselessly round the barrier, unseen in the obscurity that prevailed, and stood close to the two soldiers.

The archer who advanced upon the Pont aux Meuniers had dismissed Bourdichon ; and now prepared to return to his fellows, with the information that the coast was clear. The men stooped to resume their burthen, when, swift as thought, Perinet buried his dagger in the side of one, and before the other could discern the accident, he had shared the same fate, and fell to the ground. The torchbearer, alarmed at the rapidity of the attack, and thinking that a larger number of persons were engaged in the assault, from seeing his companions both struck down so suddenly, flew towards the Châtelet with cries for assistance, dropping his flambeau, which Perinet directly seized.

In an instant, the armourer ripped up the sack with his dagger, and the unfortunate Bourdon — pale, bleeding, and almost inanimate, rolled from its crimson folds.

“ Fly, messire,” cried Perinet hastily, “ you have not a second to lose ! Fly to Saint Jacques la Boucherie — it is a sanctuary, and I will meet you there.” Then darting to the Quai, as more soldiers issued from the Châtelet, he exclaimed : “ Gervais ! here is the cross—*Gloire à Dieu !* I have kept my word.”

The faithful boatman was waiting, and he caught the precious signal as it fell. Perinet saw him cut the rope that held his boat, and push from the shore ; then turning along the Quai, he fled precipitately.

Meanwhile, the expiring Bourdon had raised himself on his hands, and feebly endeavoured to move. But Perinet was ignorant that, although he had liberated him, the torture had crushed and mangled his limbs ; and that the blood was still flowing from his wounds, as it clotted on the hard ground. Nevertheless, he contrived to drag himself towards the centre of the Place ; and then fell insensible, as the reinforcement advanced from the Châtelet with numerous torches.

"They have escaped us!" cried a soldier, as he lifted his flambeau above his head, and gazed about the area.

"But they have left our prisoner," returned a man, in a close red hood, as he discovered Bourdon. "Let us finish our work."

At his signal, the others raised the chevalier, and bearing him in their arms, advanced upon the bridge. One of them then mounted the parapet, and aided by his companions drew up the body after him. The next moment there was a heavy plunge below, and the Seine received its victim.

The sun rose brightly the next morning, and the river, sparkling in his beams, continued its rapid course, offering no trace of the foul deed which it concealed. But at evening, when the green expanse of the Pré aux Cleres resounded with the joyous merriment of the happy crowds assembled on it for their usual pastimes—when the clerks of the Bazoche and the students of Cluny mingled gaily in the dance with the grisettes of the city—the attention of the multitude was drawn away from the revelry by the report that a fisherman had discovered a body enveloped in a sack, below the Tour du Bois, on the opposite side of the Seine. The corpse was carried to the Grève, but its envelope remained in the possession of the boatman, bearing a motto which he was unable to decipher. The more learned of the bystanders traced this inscription in rude letters upon the crimsoned canvas—

"Laissez passer la justice du Roi!"

CHAP. VI.

HOW ISABELLE AND D'ARMAGNAC PLAYED A DOUBLE GAME,
AND WHAT STEPS THE QUEEN TOOK TO AVENGE THE DEATH
OF BOURDON.

SEVERAL days had elapsed since the events of the last chapter, and queen Isabelle still remained in her Château at Tours; but she was no longer a prisoner. Her relative

and ally, the Duke of Burgundy, glad of any pretence to thwart the power of D'Armagnac, or cross his intentions, immediately upon hearing of her arrest, marched his troops from Paris, and succeeded, if not in vanquishing the forces of the constable, at least in counteracting his plans for the queen's detention; and allowing her to remain entirely her own mistress, and surrounded by her own people.

It was a lovely afternoon, and Isabelle was seated at one of the windows of her boudoir, gazing upon the fair expanse of country that encircled the château, through which the sparkling Loire, reflecting the hue of the unclouded sky above, was murmuring in its course between flower-laden banks and the rich vineyards and orchards of sunny Touraine. But the heart of the queen was ill at ease. Nearly a week had passed without the arrival of the expected signal from the armourer; and she began to fear that some untoward event had befallen the chevalier; or that Perinet himself had been prevented from communicating with the château.

She was endeavouring, for the hundredth time, to invent some plausible reason for the delay, when a gentle knocking at the door of her apartment aroused her from her reverie. Before she could well reply, the arras was lifted on one side, and D'Armagnac entered the room.

Surprise at the unexpected intrusion, for a few seconds prevented Isabelle from speaking. At length, with some effort to repress her emotion, she demanded the object of his visit.

"I shall be brief, madame," he replied coldly, as he threw his mailed gloves upon the table. "Let us not seek to hide our mutual sentiments from each other. I am your enemy; and the fire that sparkles in your eyes—the quivering of your haughty lip, bespeaks your hate."

"What strange event, then, can have made you seek me?" asked the queen.

"Circumstances, madame, which equally concern each of us. The Duke of Burgundy has declared open war against me. Now mark me, Isabelle,—having your husband in my power—being able to command his signature

to any act I may propose—the victory is certain; but your avowed support of Burgundy (although your title of regent is but an empty sound) may prolong the strife until the English army, now threatening our shores, has advanced to conquer us.”

“I do not see your intent, monsieur,” observed the queen.

“Isabelle!” cried D’Armagnac with energy, placing a parchment on the table, “I am here on a mission of peace and amity. Abandon the rebellious faction who place their sole hope in the countenance you give to their plots; and in exchange,” he added, lowering his voice, “for your signature to that effect, at the bottom of this treaty, I offer you the life and freedom of the Chevalier de Bourdon.”

“Enough, monsieur, enough,” replied the queen in a tone of raillery, which, however, but ill disguised her trepidation. “You propose that I should desert my friends, and abdicate a title pronounced legal by all the kingdom! and what do you offer in return?—the life of a young man whose loyal devotion has been by you falsely construed into a criminal *liaison*. You mistake me, D’Armagnac—look in my face; you will see hate and contempt lighting up my eyes, but there is not yet the wild gleam of delirium or madness.”

“This is no subject for idle prevarication, madame,” answered D’Armagnac, as his countenance fell. “*You love Bourdon*—you would gladly purchase his blood and life, for they are identified with your own.”

The queen rose from her seat, and, approaching the table, exclaimed in a voice teeming with rage and emotion:

“You are frank with me, sir, and I will play the same part. I loved Bourdon deeply—nay, start not at the confession; we are without eaves-droppers—and had my brow carried twenty coronets I would have given them all for his liberty, so long as he was still living, and on the road from Vincennes to Paris. But you have cast him into the Châtelet—you have closed upon him those fearful gates, which never reopen but for the egress of a corpse.

And now you dare to speak to me of his liberty — of his life !”

“ And who has proved to you, madame, that he is dead ?”

“ Who can prove that he still lives ?” sternly demanded Isabelle.

“ This letter,” replied D’Armagnac, drawing the paper from his corslet.

The queen gazed on the writing, and sank back from the constable, pale and trembling.

“ It is indeed his own !” she murmured, after a minute’s silence ; “ and he had not the courage to resist the torture ! Constable — this letter from Bourdon is as clear a proof of his death, as if I had witnessed his punishment. Give me the letter.”

Flushed with excitement, she advanced towards D’Armagnac, who calmly refolded the letter, and placed it in his belt. At this instant, the arras was withdrawn, and Marie, pale and breathless, entered the apartment.

“ He is saved, madame,” cried the girl, rushing to the queen, and holding out a small gold cross ; “ the signal has arrived !”

“ The cross !” ejaculated Isabelle ; “ it is indeed true — he lives !” Then suddenly recollecting the presence of D’Armagnac, she muttered to herself ; “ and I was about to destroy him !” “ Constable !” she continued aloud ; “ you spoke to me of a treaty — where is it ?”

“ It is here, madame,” replied D’Armagnac, taking up the parchment, and gazing at the queen as though he would penetrate her inmost heart. “ I will read it to you. ‘ We, Isabelle de Bavière, Queen of France, declare that we will for ever abandon the rebellious cause of the Duke of Burgundy ; and that we will never take up arms against our lord the king, provided that the Chevalier de Bourdon be set at liberty, and we receive an assurance of his future safety.’”

“ And if I sign that ?” asked Isabelle.

“ Bourdon shall be with you before an hour has elapsed,” replied D’Armagnac.

The queen approached the table and signed the treaties, which D'Armagnac calmly folded up and placed with the letter, as an ill-disguised smile of triumph passed over his features. Then making a slight obeisance to the queen, he left the apartment.

The instant he had departed, Isabelle eagerly questioned Marie respecting the transmission of the cross which had brought tidings of Bourdon's life. She was surprised to find that it had not been received from Perinet, whilst Marie was no less anxious to ascertain what circumstances had detained her lover. The boatman Gervais, to whom the armourer had thrown the signal from the parapet of the Quai, had met with many unforeseen delays on his way from Paris to Tours, and but for the change in the queen's fortunes, effected by the interference of Burgundy, would possibly never have arrived with his mistaken charge.

But whilst these events were transpiring, the body of Bourdon had been found in the Seine, and recognised by Perinet at the Grève, which, at this period, answered to the *Morgue* of modern Paris. Horrified at the discovery, and reflecting upon the false tidings which he had transmitted to the queen, and the trouble they might occasion, he left the capital immediately, nor rested day or night until he reached the château — where he arrived on the very evening of the queen's interview with D'Armagnac.

Isabelle and Marie were alone when he arrived. As he entered the apartment, a cry of surprise broke from the lips of the queen, and one of joy from his betrothed.

"Spurn me from your presence, madame!" he exclaimed, in answer to the queen's reception. "I sent you a message of joy, and hope——"

"For which I blessed you, Perinet," interrupted the queen. "It was my cross—the signal of Bourdon's safety."

"It should have been a token of death and vengeance!" faltered the armourer.

"Perinet! for our Lady's sake, what mean you?" demanded the queen, hurriedly.

"I knew not when I told him to reach the sanctuary at St. Jacques la Boucherie, that he could not fly. I knew not that the torture had lacerated and crushed his limbs, or that I should find his body the next day at the Grève!"

"Dead?" cried the queen, as she fell back into her fauteuil, pale as marble. "Bourdon dead! and without an effort to save him! And his assassin was here—here, unarmed and alone, this afternoon!"

"D'Armagnac at Tours!" cried Perinet.

"He was here! One word of mine would have been his destruction, and I never spoke it. Perinet, *you* have saved him; if I had not received the cross, I could have laughed at his oaths and promises. You alone have done all this;" and covering her face with her hands, she sank back and wept bitterly.

For a few seconds neither party spoke. The queen gave way to the most violent grief, and Perinet appeared lost in thought. At length, he spoke.

"I will repair this fatal error, madame, if my life pay for it. Were I to deliver the constable into your hands—were I not only to do this, but moreover to give up to you our good city of Paris, I should have done more good than evil, should I not? You will then pardon me; and I trust, in addition, accord me one favour I may ask."

"I would throw away my existence could you—but no—it is impossible!" continued the queen, checking herself. "You cannot do it."

"My father is guardian of the Porte St. Germain," answered Perinet; "he keeps the keys under his pillow. I can take them, and open the gates."

"You would not do this, Perinet?" inquired Marie, timidly glancing at her lover.

"Silence, child!" cried the queen. But in what has the constable offended you, that you would thus betray him?"

"It is of small moment, madame," replied Perinet. "You promise to grant me a favour, and if you keep your word, I will be equally trustworthy."

"What wish you—is it Marie?"

"No, madame; until I am avenged I shall not be worthy of her."

"Is it gold—nobility—honour?"

"Nothing pertaining to those empty sounds, madame. Here is a seal and parchment. As regent of France, you have power to dispose of the life or death of any of your subjects."

"What wish you, then?"

"I require your signature to this document; it will give me possession of a life which I can dispose of as I choose—which I can claim even from the executioner!"

"It is neither that of the dauphin nor the king?" demanded Isabelle.

"Neither, madame."

"I agree, then: give me the parchment." And as she ran her eyes over the contents she said, "The name must be inserted, Perinet: whose life do you wish to possess?"

"That of the Constable D'Armagnac!" replied the armourer.

The queen signed the paper, and returned it to Perinet, who received it with a glow of exultation, adding:—

"'Tis well, madame; you have kept your promise, and mine shall be equally sacred. You have five hundred lances in the town of Pontoise, who wait but your signal, and the Duke of Burgundy needs but your presence. In three days you shall hold your court in the Louvre!"

CHAP. VII.

HOW PERINET PREPARED TO DELIVER UP THE CITY INTO THE HANDS OF ISABELLE.

THE wall which Philip Augustus built, in 1190, to surround the old city of Paris, commenced on both sides the river from a little above the Pont des Arts, and terminated at the east, a short distance below the two bridges of Marie and La Tournelle, which now lead across from the north

and south to the Isle of St. Louis. It was surmounted throughout by a parapet, and fortified by towers at regular intervals ; as well as four of larger size at its extremities on the banks of the river, named *Les Tours du Bois*, de Billi, de la Tournelle, and the *Tour de Nesle*—the latter being celebrated as the scene of one of the most fearful legends ever handed down to posterity. The gates appear to have been twelve or thirteen in number, and at the period of our story (1418) opened at once upon the plains surrounding the city ; there being merely a few clusters of buildings to break the expanse. The *Porte St. Germain*—the keys of which were under the guardianship of Master *Leclerc*,—was situated as nearly as may be upon the site of the present *Carrefour de l’Odeon*, and formed one of the principal entrances to the city from the faubourg of the same name. The house of *Perinet’s* father was built against this wall, having some of its upper windows opening upon the ramparts ; whilst the lower part communicated with the *Rue de Paon*, a street no longer existing.

Little of life was stirring in the streets of old Paris after sunset, nor indeed was it safe to be alone in any spot not immediately in sight of the sentinels upon the wall. The dark and narrow thoroughfares derived the chief part of their illumination from the windows of the houses, or the occasional passage of the marching watch, bearing cressets and flambeaux : but when these had paraded, and the lights in the dwellings were extinguished, the city was wrapped in complete obscurity. It may be readily conceived that few passengers were abroad. Theft and murder were, under cover of the darkness, committed with impunity ; and the wretched unpaved roads, difficult to traverse in the day-time, were after nightfall perfectly impassable.

It is no wonder, then, that the inhabitants of the quartier adjacent to the *Porte St. Germain* were roused from their wonted quietude by an unusual turmoil in the streets some time after sunset, a few days subsequent to *Perinet’s* interview with *Queen Isabelle* at *Tours* ; or that

they speedily turned out into the open air to learn the cause of so strange a disturbance. The space in front of the gate was occupied by a large body of archers bearing torches, who kept clear a large square, in the centre of which a herald was reading a proclamation. But the general confusion prevented it from being heard by more than the few immediately around him ; and it was not until he had read it two or three times, that the bourgeois thoroughly understood its meaning, which was to this effect :

“ In the name of our Lord the King, Charles the VI. It having been proved upon the confessions of the Chevalier de Bourdon, that a criminal attachment existed between him and the queen, who, forgetful of her virtue and her rank, has proposed to monsieur the constable to abandon her new allies, on the sole condition that the chevalier should be restored to her ; as by this treaty, signed by her own hand at Tours, she confesses the crime herself, the king, aided by his council, deposes the Queen Isabelle, declares her acts null and void, and banishes her for ever from the kingdom.”

A murmur of surprise and indignation rose from the crowd, when they perfectly understood the purport of the herald's proclamation, which, it will be seen, the depth of the constable had planned from the queen's admission during their last interview. Nor was their excitement quelled, as a detachment of the guard surrounded the dwelling of Master Leclerc, whilst their captain clamoured loudly at the gate for admission.

The gate-keeper had come out upon the ramparts at the beginning of the confusion, and now demanded of the archer what he wanted.

“ You must open your doors, in the king's name,” was the reply.

“ And why has this order been given ? ” asked Leclerc.

“ Because the queen has men concealed in Paris who are devoted to her cause, and we have orders to find their hiding-places.”

“ You can enter, sir captain,” replied Leclerc ; “ this

key will admit you ; ” and tying his scarf round the key, that it might be easily seen, he threw it down to the archer, who directly opened the door of the house, and went in, accompanied by all his men, except one, whom he left on guard at the entrance.

The crowd gathered round the porch, and one or two were about to interrogate the guard, when an amazon forced her way through the mass, and giving the archer a pull, which turned him right round, sharply exclaimed,

“ So, Master Bourdichon, it is you, is it ? Inform me directly what all this means, and who it is they are looking after.”

“ My wife ! ” cried the unhappy little man, as he recognized his helpmate. “ Hush ! it is Perinet they are seeking.”

“ And wherefore ? ”

“ Because the constable is very anxious to hang him,” was the reply, in a low voice.

“ Miserable pigmy ! ” cried Dame Bourdichon, bestowing upon him a cuff which nearly knocked him through the door-way ; “ you have betrayed him, then ! ”

“ Wife ! wife ! ” exclaimed the luckless bourgeois, “ I couldn’t help it. They took me into the Châtelet, and tied me down upon an iron bed ; and in two minutes the plate got so hot, that in comparison to it, the fire of the infernal regions was as mild as a summer breeze ! I tell you, you would have betrayed your father and mother in such a strait.”

Dame Bourdichon was about to seize the halberd from her husband, and inflict upon him summary punishment, when the archers re-appeared from the house, having discovered no one beyond the usual inmates of the dwelling. The shrew fell back at their approach, and the whole body marched away, Master Bourdichon praying inwardly that something might occur which should empower him to send his wife into the Châtelet.

In another quarter of an hour, all was again tranquil ; the crowd had returned to their homes, and the band of soldiers proceeded to read the proclamation in another part

of the city. But a light still burnt in the chamber of Master Leclerc, for his mind was ill at ease, and he was pacing his room in extreme inquietude. The visit of the soldiers had somewhat alarmed him, and Perinet had been absent from Paris for several days, without his father receiving any tidings of his safety.

He opened one of the windows of his room, and stepped out upon the ramparts. It was a starlight night, and the objects immediately below the wall were plainly visible; but beyond a hundred yards' distance all was wrapped in gloom, through which could, however, be discovered the illuminated windows of the churches of St. Sulpice, and St. Germain des Prés, where mass was being performed. As he leaned against the embattlement of the turret, musing upon the occurrences of the evening, he was startled by the challenge of the sentinel on the gate, his practised ear having detected some slight movement below.

"*Qui vive?*" demanded the man sternly.

"A bourgeois of Paris," was the reply.

"You cannot enter," returned the soldier; "it is the order of the constable."

"Hold!" cried Leclerc, "I should know that voice. He is an acquaintance, Olivier, and I will answer for his entrance. Tell him I will open the wicket for him."

The sentinel conveyed the intimation of Leclerc to the stranger, as the former descended to the gate. In a minute or two he returned, followed by another person wrapped in a cloak.

"Is this new comer really one of your friends, monsieur?" demanded the patrol, approaching Master Leclerc.

"It is all right," was the reply, "and I will be answerable for him."

The sentinel appeared satisfied, and continued his round, whilst Leclerc entered his house with the stranger. He closed the windows and the shutters with apparent caution; and then the visitor threw off his cloak and hat, and the father and son were together—for it was Perinet.

"Once more then, my son," exclaimed the old man,

embracing him, "you are beneath my roof. I have been tortured with suspense, Perinet, during your absence; a hundred silly fears have destroyed my peace. But you must pardon the inquietude of a father, for I have but you in the world to love."

The armourer knelt at the old man's feet, who raised him tenderly.

"You have done well to come to my house this night, Perinet," continued Leclerc; "mischief is abroad; the city is in a perturbed state, and I know that your young blood is ardent and impatient. You are not, I trust, going to return home?"

"I came hither, my father, to beg an asylum for the night."

"There is a bed ready for you in the next chamber. But why," continued Leclerc, "are your features so sombre and pensive? they are usually joyous and laughing when you are here."

"Nothing, my father — nothing has occurred, that I am aware of," replied the armourer, hesitating and confused.

"I believe you," continued Leclerc; "and yet, your apparent agitation has somewhat alarmed me. It is not an hour since, that the archers of the constable came to this house, in search of some one whose name I could not learn."

"Well, my father," replied Perinet, "it could not be me — I have done nothing; and have moreover been several days absent from Paris. What has alarmed you?"

"I know you were punished by D'Armagnac—it is the talk of the city," said Leclerc. "Did you not threaten him at the time with hints of future vengeance?"

"I, my father! no, I was silent," answered Perinet, though the tone in which he spoke belied his words. "But you must excuse me — I am fatigued, and would seek repose, for the night is now far advanced."

As he spoke, he arose from his seat and took a lamp from the table. His father embraced him anew, and gazed at him fondly as he entered his chamber. Then

placing the keys of the Porte St. Germain under his pillow, he threw himself upon his bed, and soon fell fast asleep.

"So," muttered Perinet, as he heard the steady breathing of his father, "he sleeps calmly, and I am watching to bring eternal shame upon his grey hairs—I am here to betray—to ruin him! Vengeance, love, ambition—fiendish passions! ye have triumphed over every other feeling; ye have made me your puppet, and I dare not shrink from my task. The troops of Burgundy are by this time within earshot of the walls, and the keys that shall admit them are beneath my father's pillow. Demons of crime! give me stedfastness of purpose, or the violent throbbings of my heart will waken him, and all will be lost. Haughty D'Armagnac—the red cross which I swore you should wear, will be dearly bought; but you shall still carry it."

CHAP. VIII.

HOW PERINET STOLE THE KEYS FROM HIS FATHER, AND HOW
ISABELLE TOOK POSSESSION OF PARIS.

THE hour of midnight was proclaimed from the bell-tower of the adjacent "Hostel de Rouen," and the watchword of the sentinels, passed along the ramparts from one to the other, died away in the extreme distance, as Perinet, with faltering step, left his own room, and advanced towards the couch on which his father was sleeping. Scarcely daring to breathe, he approached the bed. As he gazed upon Leclerc's calm features, a convulsive shivering ran over his frame, and he leant against the chimney-piece for support. But the light of a small lamp that was burning in the room showed a portion of the chain on which the keys of the gates were hung, just visible from under the old man's pillow; and the sight of this recalled him to the object of his adventure. Summoning up all his decision,

he passed his hand to the head of the bed, and seized the chain; but, slight as was the disturbance caused by the attempt, it had the effect of rousing Leclerc, who, accustomed to be called up at all hours to admit the constable or his emissaries, was awakened by the most trifling noise. The guardian sprang up, and fixed his gaze upon his son, as the latter drew the keys rapidly away, and concealed them beneath his cloak.

"Perinet!" cried Leclerc, with the confused ideas of a man whose slumber has been suddenly broken, "Perinet! what do you here?"

The armourer remained silent,—apparently stupified at the unexpected awaking of his father.

"Why do I find you at my bed-side?" continued Leclerc. "You have not slept yourself. Answer me—why do you remain thus gazing at me so vacantly?" Then mechanically passing his hand under his pillow, he ejaculated, "Where are my keys?—they are gone! Perinet, you have deceived me—you have stolen my keys!"

"I—my father!" confusedly replied the armourer.

"You have stolen them from beneath my pillow, as I slept. Restore them immediately, and I will seek no further to demand the reasons for this black proceeding."

"They are here, my father," replied Perinet, drawing the bunch from his girdle; "they are here—but I cannot give them back—I must keep them."

"Restore them, I tell you," cried Leclerc.

"I cannot. They are in my possession, and must remain so. I have been degraded—degraded as a vassal, before all! I spoke as a man, and was beaten! I held my peace, and still I was beaten! No one screened me—no one defended me! But I have the keys of Paris, and they will avenge me."

The old man turned pale with emotion, as he gazed upon his son. "I have kept those keys," he faltered out, "faithfully and truly for twenty long years. The Bourguignons are waiting for them—I know it. You have promised to deliver them up, even at the cost of my life!—Perinet," he continued, seizing his son's arm as he

leaped from the couch, "my keys! my keys! Restore them, I implore you."

"Away!" cried the armourer, "you cannot have them—they are mine—leave them in my possession."

"Never!" cried Leclerc, clinging to his son with desperate energy.

"Away," repeated Perinet, "I implore you—I *command* it—or you will drive my soul to perdition!" and he thrust the old man from him with such power, that he reeled and fell upon the bed.

"You have your hand upon your dagger!" cried Leclerc, in breathless accents. "Perinet, do you not see how vainly you strive to draw it from its sheath? The gaze of your father has transfixed your arm to your side.—Boy, you have not calculated the task which you undertook: what remains to be done is beyond your power."

The armourer quivered beneath the reproaches of Leclerc. He drew the polished blade from its sheath, and cast it from him; then falling on his knees at the bedside, clung to his father's prostrate form. "Do you then kneel to me, Perinet?" exclaimed Leclerc: "Is it thus that you would say—'Old man, let me dishonour thee? What matter shame and infamy at thy advanced age?'"

"My father!"

"Behold me at thy feet," continued Leclerc, in bitter irony, "I—thy son—thy sole pride—whose deeds thou didst so love to vaunt, but whom thou canst not now speak of!"

"Enough, my father—spare me, I implore you!" cried the agonized son.

"It is with prayers and entreaties you would tell me all this," said Leclerc. "Rise, Perinet: you have struck a blow to my heart, far more cruel than your dagger could have given."

"You may curse me, father—you may kill me, an' you will; but I have sworn an oath, and I must accomplish it. Ha! we are interrupted."

As he was speaking, a loud knocking was heard at the door, and the confused hum of voices, and tread of an

apparently large body of men, rose from the street below. Leclerc went into the balcony to ascertain the cause of the disturbance; and Perinet, agitated by the slightest sound concealed himself behind the heavy drapery which, in accordance with the custom of the period, shrouded the door that led from his father's room to his own chamber.

A single glance sufficed to show Leclerc that D'Armagnac was at the head of the troop of archers who now clamoured for admittance into his house. He therefore immediately descended the small flight of stairs in the body of the wall, and unlocking the wicket at the bottom, ushered the constable and a few of his leading men upon the ramparts.

"May I know your pleasure, monseigneur?" asked the guardian of the keys.

For a few seconds, D'Armagnac made no reply. Then, assuming a stern expression of countenance, he pointed with his truncheon towards his guards. "You must follow those men, Leclerc," he said; "the keys of the Porte St. Germain are no longer in your possession."

"The keys withdrawn, sir! Of what ill-doing have I been found guilty, to merit this disgrace?" asked the old man.

"Your son has committed a crime, for which his head ought to pay the forfeit," replied D'Armagnac; "and you are suspected of having assisted in his escape. This man," he continued, pointing to Bourdichon, who formed one of his escort, "has the commission to replace you."

"Constable, I implore you," cried Leclerc, "drive me not thus away in the middle of the night. To-morrow, monseigneur—wait but until to-morrow, and I will obey you."

"It is with deep regret I am compelled to act in this manner," replied the constable coldly; "for I counted always upon your fidelity. Deliver the keys to Bourdichon, and follow my archers. Where are they?"

"There, monseigneur—in my chamber."

This conversation upon the ramparts had not been lost upon Perinet. The window which led out upon the platform was open, and being situated close to where he

was concealed, his ear drew in every syllable. Aware that the keys must be produced, he hurriedly detached the one which opened the principal gate from the iron ring on which they were placed, and then gliding across the room placed the bunch upon the table ; concealing himself once more behind the drapery, just as Bourdichon, at the command of the constable, entered the room to take his new charge. It was a moment of keen suspense to Leclerc, who, believing that Perinet still kept the keys, had expected Bourdichon would return without them. But his confidence was restored, as he saw the archer step out upon the ramparts with them in his hand.

"I pity you, Leclerc," said D'Armagnac, as the guardian silently took his place amongst the archers ; "but the order once passed, cannot be revoked."

"Constable !" exclaimed Leclerc, advancing and kneeling before him, "you will not repulse an old man who throws himself at your feet to beg the life of his only son. One word, one promise for his safety, and I shall rest content with my destiny. Is there nothing to hope for, monseigneur ?" he continued, as he observed the constable's immoveable features : "neither pity nor pardon ? I will kneel to you no longer, sir : but fate may do her worst. Gentlemen, I am your prisoner."

Thus speaking, he fell into the ranks of the guard that attended upon the constable, and the whole party then moved off along the ramparts, leaving only Master Bourdichon before Leclerc's house, and the sentinel who was upon guard over the Porte St. Germain.

As the sound of the retiring party died away, Périnet once more stole from his concealment, and hastily extinguished the lamp which Leclerc had left burning upon the table. Master Bourdichon continued gazing after the escort of the constable, until the blaze of the last cresset faded in the distance : and then feeling somewhat cold, and withal weary, entered the house, mumbling a variety of unconnected sentences relative to his new occupation, and the probable punishment or imprisonment which awaited the ex-guardian.

There was a small lantern-tower room at the summit of Leclerc's house, in which a light was constantly burning all night ; as much for the purpose of keeping the sentinel on the alert, whose business it was occasionally to ascend and trim it, as to serve for a beacon to the traveller, over the rough bridle-roads and obscure paths that intersected the faubourgs of the old city. Finding that the lamp was extinguished in the room below, Bourdichon, after various futile attempts to kindle a flame from the few sparks amidst the embers on the hearth, groped his way to the foot of the staircase leading to this observatory, and ascended it, with the intention of re-lighting his lamp from the beacon above. This was exactly the proceeding which Perinet had wished to bring about. Gliding from the arras, he followed the bourgeois across the room with noiseless step ; his progress being, moreover, covered by the incessant displacement of different articles of furniture which Bourdichon, in his ignorance of their situation, was perpetually coming in contact with. At length, the archer discovered the door leading to the upper part of the house ; which he had no sooner passed, than Perinet drew it to after him, and bolted it on the near side. Leaving the unconscious prisoner to continue his ascent, he returned to his old position ; and ascertaining that the back of the sentinel was turned towards him, crept out upon the ramparts. But at the moment that he gained the parapet, the sentinel, apparently alarmed at an unexpected noise, gave the cry of alarm, in a loud impressive voice. Not an instant was to be lost. Perinet was convinced that the guard had perceived the troops of Burgundy in the Pré aux Clercs, where they had silently advanced, according to agreement. Springing upon the sentinel, who had climbed the parapet, apparently to obtain a better view of the country, he threw all his power into one effort, and hurled the luckless warder into the fosse beneath the wall. Then, hastily drawing a briquet from his pouch, he procured a light, and set fire to the draperies that surrounded the windows of Leclerc's house ; having made sure that

Bourdichon, in the event of the conflagration, could escape along the roof.

Already had the sentinels, aroused at the challenge from the Porte St. Germain, prepared to arouse the troops, and for that purpose now hurried along the ramparts in every direction. But, as the fire caught the furniture of the house, a thousand torches, in reply to the signal, burst forth from the champaign below : whose light was thrown back from the countless suits of mail that were now approaching the gates. Rushing down the staircase in the wall, Perinet threw open the portals, as the leaders of the Bourguignian force came up to them ; and in another minute they were pouring, with the force and impetuosity of a swollen mountain torrent, into the city. On they came, lighted by the flames from Leclerc's late habitation, and rousing the frightened citizens from their beds by their tumultuous entry ; in the midst of which, encircled by a ring of blazing cressets, and guarded by a body of picked men-at-arms, Isabelle de Bavière rode through the gate, mounted on a splendid palfrey, the last present of the Duc de Bourgogne

"We have done well, messieurs," she exclaimed, as she reined in her steed in the centre of the square : "Graville : L'Isle Adam, you will seek the king, and make him your prisoner—we shall have gained nothing if he escapes us. And now to the Hôtel St. Paul — 'tis the abode of D'Armagnac ; but remember—living or dead, his body belongs to Perinet Leclerc."

CHAP. IX.

THE ATTACK UPON THE HOTEL ST. PAUL.

THE alarm created by the entrance of Isabelle, and the troops of Burgundy, into the city, soon spread over every quarter. The sentinels on the ramparts catching the

sound of the mighty uproar, and perceiving the red glare in the sky from the conflagration of Leclerc's house, the flames from which now rose above the surrounding buildings, illuminating all the adjacent spires and towers with a vivid glare, passed the word of danger from one to the other ; and in a few minutes it had gone the round of the city—at least that part of it which was situated on the south bank of the Seine. Nor was the alarm confined to the localities immediately contiguous to the walls. The different movements which were going on in the crowded streets between the Porte St. Germain, and the Rue de la Harpe—the frequent passage of the couriers, as their horses clattered furiously along them, to points with which it was necessary to be in communication—the constant thronging of horsemen and persons bearing torches through the usually deserted thoroughfares, and all the growing bustle attendant upon the eve of so eventful a struggle, had awakened from slumber all the inhabitants of the quarters principally disturbed by the *émeute*. Rising from their beds, they left their houses and sought the streets, to gain some information as to the cause of the wild uproar. But no one had time, or cared to answer their questions ; and, hurried on by the throng of archers, cavalry, and the excited multitude that accompanied them, they were irresistibly borne along towards the heart of the city.

But a short time elapsed ere the alarm became general. A few of the more resolute of Isabelle's troops, by the orders of Perinet, pressed on towards the Petit Pont, bearing down all who opposed their progress ; and on reaching the abode of the armourer, distributed all the weapons they found in his workshop to the bourgeois and rabble that followed them. A few of the constable's guard, collected hurriedly together, offered some slight resistance at the foot of the bridge ; but they were soon overcome, the excited revolvers hurling all those who were not immediately cut down over the low parapet of the bridge, into the rapid Seine, wherein, by reason of their heavy and cumbersome armour, they were drowned. Passing into the open space before the cathedral of Nôtre Dame, they halted

for a few minutes to collect themselves into something like order ; then, again pressing on over the Pont au Change, on the northern side of the Isle du Palais, they divided into two unequal parties. The lesser one proceeded to take possession of the Hôtel de Ville, dispatching a few men to sound the dreaded tocsin from the bell-tower of St. Germain l'Auxerrois ; and the more powerful division immediately commenced an attack upon the Grand Châtelet, where they knew many favourable to their cause, and, from their station, likely to exert some influence over the citizens, were in confinement.

Ten minutes after the bell had rung its sounds of omen over Paris, the city was in a state of general insurrection. The windows of the majority of the buildings were lighted up in haste, such being the almost compulsory usage upon such occasions ; and the tenants of the smaller houses following this example, the city was speedily illuminated in every part. In an hour from the period of the entrance of the Bourguignians, the most powerful barricades had been thrown up in the various streets, composed, in lieu of paving stones, of furniture, unceremoniously taken from the adjacent houses ; whilst the populace, on gaining access to the Châtelet, found the majority of the chains which had been used, up to 1382, to barricade the streets and the river ; and fixing them to the gigantic hooks which still remained in the corner houses, thus effectually precluded the attacks of an opposing force.

The reader may possibly remember that we left Master Bourdichon enclosed in the observatory of Leclerc's house, at the time it was set fire to. As Perinet had opened the tower door, the honest bourgeois was not long in gaining the streets ; and being recognised by the crowd, he was immediately ordered to conduct a detachment of the queen's troops to the Hôtel St. Paul, the palace which formed the residence of the constable, and where it was known he had the hapless king in his charge. He was not long in obeying the command, partly because he saw the utter futility of offering anything like opposition to their orders, but principally from his wish to look after the safety of his

own home, which was situated close to the hotel ; and where the struggle would in all probability be the fiercest, from the contiguity of the Bastile, which was garrisoned with the chief part of D'Armagnac's available forces. Being mounted upon a horse, with an archer on each side of him, as much for the sake of keeping him on his steed, as to prevent him from deserting the party, he set forth ; and leading them to the Tournelle, they crossed the river in detachments, seizing all the boats they could find, and by this means arrived on the quai adjoining the hotel much sooner than they could have done by going through the city, and across the bridges, all of which were by this time barricaded and impassable. Collecting on the river's bank in silence, the troops then rushed on to the Rue St. Antoine, and, as they now were perfectly acquainted with the localities, took less heed of their guide. Whereupon Master Bourdichon, perceiving that he was approaching his house, gave a loud cheer of encouragement, and crying out, " Down with Armagnac," quietly turned into his own *porte cochère*, which stood open, and slipped off from his horse. From the passage, a small panel conducted into the shop, and of this he had contrived to preserve the key in the confusion. But he was somewhat surprised to find it yielded with extreme difficulty to his efforts, as if a powerful force was counteracting his endeavours on the other side. Bringing all his strength into play, he pushed it open, and was somewhat relieved in his ideas of plunder and invasion, to find the obstacle was no other than his wife ; who, half-dead with fear, from the tumult in the street, the alarm-bell, and the distant conflagrations, had placed a heavy chair against the panel, and seated herself in it, the more effectually to repel any intruders.

As Bourdichon entered, encased in armour, and begrimed with dirt and smoke, the first act of his better half was to fall down on her knees and implore mercy, taking him for one of the invading party. But the sound of his voice recalled her to her senses.

" Sainte Marie ! " she exclaimed, ' it is only my husband."

"The same, wife; the same;" gasped the bourgeois, sinking down into the chair his wife had quitted: "Real flesh and bone, and nought beside."

"And what is all this dreadful uproar?" demanded his wife. "For the last half-hour the fearful tumult has almost deprived me of my faculties."

Master Bourdichon inwardly wished that speech might have ranked amongst the deprivations. But, fearing to excite his wife's anger, when he had no one to defend him, he merely answered, "They are going to kill the constable."

As he spoke, a ray of light, more vivid than any which had yet been perceived, shot up amidst the roar of a thousand wild voices, and apparently close to Bourdichon's abode, rendering the apartment as light as noontide, and every object distinctly visible.

"'Tis the Hôtel St. Paul!" cried Dame Bourdichon. "They have set fire to it!"

"They could not find the constable," replied the bourgeois; "and so they mean to roast him alive in his hiding-place."

"The flames increase!" exclaimed his wife, "and may possibly catch our house! I have left the top windows open, and the wind will carry the burning embers into the chamber."

"I will go and close them," returned her husband. "If they knock without in my absence, do not answer. Master Bourdichon! with the most innocent intentions, into what a wasp's nest have you thrust your unlucky head!"

As Bourdichon departed up stairs, grumbling as he went, his wife hastily tried the various fastenings of the apartment. The shutter of the window remained insecure, and she approached to close it, when a violent blow upon the outside made her shrink back, terrified and powerless. The knocks were repeated; she heard the glass of the casement shivered to pieces, and immediately afterwards, the shutter was beaten forcibly into the room, and D'Armagnac appeared at the opening, pale and distracted; his dagger in

his teeth, and staggering beneath the weight of a body which he was carrying. With some difficulty he passed through the low window, and entered the room.

"Silence, woman, on your life!" he exclaimed sternly, as Dame Bourdichon commenced crying loudly for aid.

"Holy Mother!" cried the dame, recognising him, "it is the constable!"

For an instant D'Armagnac replied not; but placing his burthen, enveloped in a long grey mantle, in a chair, closed the window, as well as its shattered state would allow, and hastily replaced the shutter. Then, turning to the dame, he said:

"You are right—I am D'Armagnac, the constable of France, and I place myself under your protection! Holy powers!" he continued energetically, "to be thus surprised in the middle of the night, without arms or defence. But I will yet escape the felons who have betrayed me; they will not think to search for me here. Woman! you will not betray me?"

"My lord!" cried the dame, overcome to find herself in such august presence, "I swear to keep your secret. But you are not alone;" and she pointed to the form he had brought with him.

"It is an old man," replied the constable: "an old servant, whose room was on fire as I left the hôtel: he would have been burnt had I not brought him here."

"Look you, how he trembles!" exclaimed Dame Bourdichon.

The unhappy king, for it was indeed Charles whom D'Armagnac had brought with him, feebly put aside a portion of the mantle that covered his face; and, looking with a vacant expression at the constable, muttered:

"I am cold—very, very cold."

"Quick! quick! mother!" cried D'Armagnac; "re-kindle the fire; the hand of this old man is cold as ice."

"I will go and seek some wood, my lord," she replied, as she left the apartment. For the last few minutes the tumult in the street had been less violent, or probably the dame would have lacked courage to go alone.

"Still those cries!" thought D'Armagnac, as he heard the distant shouts, Burgundy! Burgundy! in the heart of Paris. "Who could have given up the keys? Fool that I was, to allow myself to be surprised like a child—to know that whilst I was sleeping, treason kept its untiring watch. All is not yet lost; the king, whom my enemies are now seeking in all directions, is there—there, in my power! Oh, that he could but understand me! But he remains insensible to all around him; he is even unconscious of my presence."

He approached the king, and seizing his emaciated arm, endeavoured to rouse him from his apathy.

"Sire!" he exclaimed, with vehemence, "I—your constable—have saved your life! The Bourguignians have entered the city, and I have concealed you here, until a party of my own guards can convey you to the Bastile, which is impregnable. Sire! do you hear me?"

The hapless monarch threw an unmeaning glance at the constable, and muttering, "I am very cold," again relapsed into silence.

"Still senseless," remarked the constable; "and yet in this poor witless creature is comprised all my power. Fortunately, the woman has not recognised him."

As Dame Bourdichon re-appeared, carrying some wood, with which she speedily raised a fire from the embers, the king left his seat, and crouched down on a settle under the spacious chimney, still wrapping his mantle closely round him. Whilst he was thus occupied, some fresh cries resounded from the street.

"At last, they are here;" cried D'Armagnac, as he heard his name pronounced amidst the tumult. "Open that door, woman,—they are my friends who come this way."

Being assured there was no great danger to be dreaded, Dame Bourdichon opened the door, and directly afterwards, upon a signal from D'Armagnac, a party of his guards entered, headed by Dupuy, who started with surprise upon seeing the constable.

"We have no time for explanation, Dupuy," cried

D'Armagnac hastily. "Give me a sword; and tell me—where is the Dauphin Charles?"

"Duchâtel has saved him, sire," replied Dupuy, "he is in safety at the Bastile." Then lowering his voice, he added, "and the king, what has become of him?"

"He is also preserved," replied D'Armagnac, in the same tone, directing his eyes towards the chimney place, where the monarch still remained cowering over the fire. "Silence—all may yet be well."

"It is necessary that the soldiers should see you, my lord," continued Dupuy. "They begin to mistrust your absence."

"Do they defend the posts with success?" asked D'Armagnac.

"Those at the Châtelet are all slaughtered, sire; and the prison doors thrown open; but the Genoese archers, at the Louvre, have repulsed every attack."

"I will go and join them, Dupuy—I leave the king in your hands; conduct him to the Bastile, where he will be secure. You will find me at the Louvre, if I can reach it. A few of your archers will accompany me thither, with a guide who can lead us away from the Bourguignian sentinels."

"Ho! Master Bourdichon!" cried the dame, as she heard the last part of the constable's speech, to her husband, who from fear had remained upon the stairs for the last half hour. "The constable requires a guide, and you must serve him."

"Thou here!" exclaimed D'Armagnac, as Bourdichon crept forward. "Where are the keys of the Porte St. Germain which I entrusted to you?"

The bourgeois was unable to reply, but his wife came to his assistance. "My lord," she exclaimed, "they burnt the gate and were going to put him on the top of the fire, when he managed to escape. He will serve as a good guide, for he knows all the Bourguignian positions."

"Archers," cried the constable, "place that man amongst you, and if he betrays us cut his throat. Dupuy

—you have received my orders. The king must be preserved, or he must die. Forwards.”

Bourdichon opened the small door, and the constable with his guard passed through. A few archers remained with Dupuy, and these, with the king and Dame Bourdichon, were now left occupiers of the apartment.

As soon as they were gone, Dupuy advanced towards the king, and whispered to him, unheard by the rest,

“Will monseigneur accompany us to the Bastile?”

“You need not trouble yourself to disturb that old man,” said Dame Bourdichon. “He is warm there, and does not need to be moved.”

“Silence, woman,” replied Dupuy, offering his arm to the king. The monarch stared at him with the same vacant gaze, and was about to take it, when a loud tumult arose in the street, amidst which the watchword “Bourgogne” was plainly audible.

“The Bourguignians!” cried Dupuy, running to the window. “The constable has not been perceived by them; but they have closed the way to the Bastile.”

“They have perceived us,” cried an archer, “and are coming this way.”

“Then is there but one chance left,” thought Dupuy. “They will recognise the king, and bear him off. Archers,” he continued aloud, “we must attack them. D’Armagnac and victory!”

Thus speaking, he rushed out, followed by his guards; and the next instant a fearful struggle in the street proved that they had come in collision with their enemies. The noise and cries increased, but, in the middle of all this tumult, the poor king remained motionless upon the settle, covering his face with his hands in childish apathy. The strife went on, and so near the dwelling, that the partisans and lances of the soldiers continually beat against the window; and when the uproar appeared at its highest, the alarm of Dame Bourdichon was raised to the extreme of terror, by another violent knocking at the door.

“Holy Mother!” cried the dame, scarcely able to speak for fear. “Who is there?”

"Open quickly," cried a voice. "We are friends; it is I—Perinet Leclerc."

CHAP. X.

HOW ISABELLE AND D'ARMAGNAC MET THE KING AT BOURDICHON'S HOUSE DURING THE REVOLT.

UPON recognising the voice of Perinet above the confusion of the revolt, Dame Bourdichon was not slow in opening the door; for the increasing uproar, the clang of arms, the sounds of the alarm bells, the glare of the conflagrations, and her own unaided situation, had all conspired to paralyse her usual energies. As she drew back the panel, the armourer entered pale from loss of blood, which was flowing from a cut on the forehead, received by chance as he threaded the streets, staggering beneath the weight of Isabelle, who accompanied him, half carried, half dragged, after him.

"You are safe here, madame, at least," he exclaimed in breathless accents, as they crossed the threshold, to the trembling queen. "The Hôtel St. Paul is crumbling beneath the flames, and, at present, we can find no other refuge."

"But they will return," replied the queen, looking anxiously round as she parted her long dark tresses from her forehead. "They will find me here, and I shall become their victim."

"Rest assured," continued the armourer, "that you are in safety. They are falling by hundreds, or flying before our troops."

"What a fearful night!" exclaimed Isabelle, placing her hand before her eyes, as if to shut out the bright red light that streamed into the room. "Leave me not here alone, Perinet, I implore you."

"You have naught to fear, madame," answered the armourer. "Your own party know of your retreat, and

will come here to join you. But for me — I can stay here no longer ; a solemn vow binds me, and I must depart.”

“ And D’Armagnac ? —— ” cried the queen.

“ It is the constable, madame, that I am seeking ; we have an old account to settle,” replied Perinet, with bitterness. Then, passing through the panel, he left the apartment, leaving Isabelle with Dame Bourdichon and the king, who still remained unconscious of the passing events, couched beneath his mantle, in the corner of the spacious chimney.

As Perinet departed, the fright of the dame returned, and she would have called him back, had not Isabelle requested her to be silent ; reminding her, at the same time, that her cries would direct others towards the house, whose presence would not be so desirable. Her caution even extended to putting out the lamp, lest it should be seen from the street, and trusting only to the fitful gleams of the burning Hôtel St. Paul for light.

“ Is this shop the only apartment in the house that looks into the street ? ” asked the queen.

“ There is my chamber above it, madame,” was the reply of the dame.

“ Take your station, then, at the window,” said Isabelle ; “ and if you see any troops pass, crying the password of Burgundy, call them in immediately. We shall then be surrounded by our friends.”

The woman left the shop, to ascend to her own apartment, leaving Isabelle in perfect darkness, broken only, as we have observed, by occasional flashes of light from the conflagration. The tumult of the combat had died away ; the street no longer resounded with the cries of the soldiery, and the din of weapons ; but an impressive and awful stillness supervened, occasionally interrupted by a distant murmur, which again dying away, served only to render the silence more fearful. Unconscious of her husband’s presence, the queen retired to the embayment of the window, and gathering her rich mantle, now torn and soiled, closely round her, appeared lost in her own reflections. In her present position, the calm that now reigned

was more harassing than the excitement of the tumult; and yet, in this quietude, every eye in the large city was awake, and every ear was vigilant for catching the least sound.

She had been plunged in this reverie for about a quarter of an hour, when an approaching confusion once more recalled her to a sense of her dangerous position. Shouts and cries of alarm, with the clamour as of an irritated multitude, rose from the street. Now the riot approached — it was immediately under the window; and the torches borne by the crowd lighted up the shop as they passed. They pressed on, and the light became less vivid, and the noise more distant; it was evident from their speed that they were pursuing some object of importance.

Suddenly, the queen heard footsteps in the passage. It was clear they arose from a single individual, who moved with difficulty. Then the panel was opened, and some one entered the apartment, breathing hard and audibly, as if with pain. The stranger approached the spot where the queen rested, and feeling about in the obscurity, placed his hand upon her very chair, when Isabelle rose hurriedly.

"There is some one here," cried the intruder, as the queen started up. "Who art thou? Answer."

But Isabelle spoke not. She recognised the voice of the constable, and fear had deprived her of utterance.

"Answer me," continued D'Armagnac, for it was he, seizing her arm. "You shall not leave until you have replied. You are not the woman I left here, for she was old and wrinkled; but you are young; your flesh is soft, and your skin fine and delicate. Why do you fear to be recognised?"

He paused for an answer, but in vain. The trembling Isabelle still remained silent.

An involuntary expression of surprise burst from D'Armagnac, as he passed his hand over the queen's head and neck.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "what have we here? Gold — jewels — a coronet! Isabelle! you are unknown no longer!"

"D'Armagnac," faltered the queen, now that she saw that all concealment was useless, "you have discovered my retreat, but I am not yet your prisoner."

"Neither am I in your power," returned the constable. "We are alone — we are each expecting aid and succour. To whomsoever it arrives first will be the victory."

"L'Isle Adam! Graville!" cried the queen anxiously. "Where are ye?"

"They forgot you, Isabelle," returned D'Armagnac, with bitterness. "They have but their own safety to care for, and you are but a cipher in their stratagems."

"They are coming!" exclaimed Isabelle, joyously, as a noise was heard in the street, amidst which the war-cry of Burgundy was plainly to be distinguished.

"Let them hasten, then," replied the constable, as another cry of "D'Armagnac!" sounded from the outside of the building. "They must be speedy, or they will not be here first. Listen, Isabelle! do you not hear my name pronounced?"

"'Tis a vain hope," returned the queen, after an instant of attention. "Your partisans are already silent. Again—'Vive Bourgogne!' 'tis the only name they will cry to-night."

The king, who had to this moment remained in the same fixed attitude at the hearth, lifted up his head at the queen's mention of the name of Burgundy, and assumed an attitude of attention.

"To-morrow," cried the constable, "there will be but one cry in the city—it will be 'Vive D'Armagnac!'"

He had scarcely spoken, when the king sprang from his seat, and rushed towards them, exclaiming,—

"And who will cry 'Vive la France?'"

The queen and the constable started with surprise and terror at the unexpected apparition of the unfortunate monarch, for they immediately recognised him.

"Ay, France!" continued Charles, speaking with an emphasis which he had long since lost. "Is there not, in this unhappy kingdom, but one old man, helpless and insane, who thinks of her? Always 'Armagnac,' or

‘Burgundy,’ and nothing for our fair France, although her best blood is flowing like water to feed their enmity.”

“Merciful powers!” cried the queen, half bewildered, “how came he here?”

“They have spilt this blood in their quarrels,” continued the king wildly, “whilst I alone must render an account to God for it,—I, who carry neither the white nor red cross upon my shoulders. Armagnac! I demanded aid and protection for my people,—I placed my kingdom in your hands to do this: how have you accomplished it?”

“Let her reply, sire,” answered the constable, with emphasis; “let her reply who gave up your kingdom to a stranger.”

“And yet she swore to defend it!” exclaimed the king.

There was something in the manner of the unhappy Charles that awed both parties. It was long since he had spoken with the force and semblance of reason, and the queen shrank before his reproaches.

“I could not defend it, sire,” she replied. “Was I not driven from France by the constable’s order?”

“It is true—too true,” returned the king; “I have known nothing but hatred and treachery from all quarters. Upon whom shall I cast my malediction?”

“Ask him who drove me from you,” cried the queen.

“Ask the *mistress* of the Chevalier Bourdon,” added the constable.

“He wished to crush me for a crime he could not prove,” continued Isabella.

“And you sought to justify yourself by fire and sword,” retorted the king. “Isabelle! did you think that I should be always mad? Did you never tremble at the idea that a ray of sense might one day break in upon me?”

“You reply not, madame,” said the constable; “the king waits for your answer.”

“Isabelle!” continued Charles, vehemently, “you have dishonoured my old age—shame and disgrace be yours for so doing. You have betrayed the kingdom—you

have delivered up my crown into the hands of a traitor—eternal torments be your reward. I curse you, I spurn you from my presence as I would a serpent.”

“My lord!” cried the agonised woman, “you know not what you say. I am innocent.”

“You are guilty,” said the king sternly, “and the punishment of your crimes awaits you. I have pronounced your doom.”

“And who will dare to execute your orders, whatever they may be?” demanded the queen, recalling her fortitude by a violent effort.

“One who has never betrayed his master, and who will be still faithful to him,” interposed the constable.

“You would not assassinate me?” exclaimed the queen.

“I would obey my master,” coldly returned D’Armagnac.

“No!” cried Isabelle, falling on her knees, and clinging to the king’s robe; “this must not be, my lord; you will retract these fearful words; you will not thus condemn a woman who sues for pardon; for I am alone and defenceless. If I am guilty, my lord, deliver me over to the peers of my kingdom; but kill me not without a trial—it would be murder.”

“At my feet, Isabelle!” observed the king, apparently heedless of her appeal; “it is long since you have thus acted.”

“My liege!” continued the queen, in hurried accents, “whatever you may deem me now, you once loved me. You cannot spurn me from you when I thus supplicate for mercy.”

“Sire!” exclaimed D’Armagnac, “she used these begging accents when she asked the guardianship of Vincennes for the Chevalier Bourdon.”

As the constable pronounced the name, Isabelle rose from her kneeling posture, and fixing her gaze stedfastly on him, continued, “It was an act of honour and trust well kept, to murder that young man at the Châtelet.” Then turning to the king she added: “Enough blood has been already spilt—must mine still be added to the

stream? But, if it is your will—I submit: you alone will answer to Heaven for the shedding of it; and another phantom, in place of the one you dread, will be always at your side.”

The queen had well chosen her words. At the bare mention of the phantom, which had first caused the madness of the king, and which haunted him ever afterwards, he uttered a wild cry and clung to D’Armagnac for safety, ejaculating, as he pointed at some imaginary object—“See, he is there! he comes towards me. I can feel his cold breath upon my face, and I have not the power to thrust him from me!”

“Monsieur,” exclaimed D’Armagnac, “there is no spectre here. Recall your reason, I beseech you—collect yourself, or all will yet be lost.”

But the queen saw the advantageous position her allusion to the phantom had gained for her, and she continued, “Now tell the constable to kill me, sire. I am prepared to die, but to-morrow I shall again be with you,—at your council—in your court: at your festive banquet, or lonely midnight watching, I shall be ever at your side.”

“No, no, returned the king, “it must not be.”

“You would not retract your sentence, sire?” said the constable. “Is she not guilty? and have you not pronounced her condemnation?”

Before the king could reply, a wild uproar broke the silence, which came nearer and nearer, until the streets re-echoed with its tumult. Rushing to the window, the constable tore down the shutters and looked into the street. A thousand men-at-arms were hurrying along its narrow thoroughfare, and the cries of “Vive la Reine!” raised by innumerable voices, were the only ones heard amidst the confusion. The queen caught the sounds, and seizing the constable by the arm, as she drew him from the window, exclaimed, “At length, they have arrived. Now, D’Armagnac, our long struggle shall be speedily settled. Even now, you would have murdered me. Blood shall still flow to end the strife, but it will be your own.”

CHAP. XI.

CONCLUSION.—THE GIBBET AT MONTFAUÇON.

THE crowd of soldiers, and adherents to the cause of Burgundy and the queen, who now came rushing onwards in the Rue St. Antoine, were headed, as Isabelle had conjectured, by L'Isle Adam and Graville, under the guidance of Bourdichon, who, captured from the party to whose care the constable had consigned him, once more found himself in the number of the queen's troops. Tossed about like a ball by the excited mob—now banded over head from one to the other, and anon borne a short way on the shoulders of the sturdiest rioters—the luckless little bourgeois had scarcely an atom of breath left in his body; and it was by the medium of an energetic action, rather than words, that, on arriving in front of his own house, he made the multitude understand it was the locality where he had left the constable. But his intelligence was scarcely needed; for Isabelle had thrown open the casement, and was waving on her partisans to enter the house with her scarf, which she had hurriedly detached for the purpose.

With the eagerness of a pack of bloodhounds rushing upon their prey, the mob beat in the doors, and rushed into the house, bearing their torches aloft, with the uncontrollable force of a mighty inundation. At the first alarm, D'Armagnac drew his sword, and placed himself by the panel; but as soon as he perceived the utter hopelessness of any opposition he could offer, he threw the weapon away from him, and, quietly folding his arms, retreated to the king's side, as the apartment filled with the rioters.

"Death to the constable!" was shouted by a hundred voices, as they perceived D'Armagnac in their power; and one or two advanced towards him, brandishing their daggers. On perceiving this movement, the king threw himself in their way, exclaiming,

"What want ye with the constable? Whoever ye are,

spare his life, for he is the only friend I have remaining. Ye would not kill him by my side?"

"The king!" cried several of the foremost of the Bourguignians, as they recognised Charles, and fell back spontaneously.

"Isabelle," continued the monarch, turning to his consort, "why do you wish for his death? You have power to set him free—one word from you, and his life is saved."

"I have no power over it, monseigneur," answered the queen; "it belongs to another, who is not here."

"I implore you ——"

"Enough, enough, my liege!" interrupted Isabelle, seizing with energy the hands of the king, and forcing them down from the attitude of supplication which he was assuming. Then, turning to the crowd, she exclaimed, "I am queen and regent—no word can be potent here but mine; and the constable is my enemy."

Another wild shout arose from the soldiers, as they again rushed towards D'Armagnac, who fell, upon receiving a wound in his leg from the halberd of one of the men-at-arms. The king uttering a cry of terror, threw his mantle over the prostrate constable, and stood before him, upon which the soldiers once more fell back; until, encouraged by the presence of the queen, Griville drew the king away from his minister. At this instant, a man, pale and breathless, entered the room; and, forcing his way through the dense mass of rioters, stood over the prostrate constable, with his drawn sword pointed towards the insurgents.

"Back, all of you!" he cried with energy; "the life of this man belongs to me—I alone can dispose of it."

"Perinet!" cried the queen, as she recognised the armourer.

"You will not kill him, then," exclaimed the king "Order these fearful men to retreat, or they will assassinate him."

"Not one of their weapons shall touch him, sire," replied Perinet. Then, turning to the queen, he continued, "Isabelle, I kept my word when faith was wanted, and I expect the same from you. I have, in my doublet, a paper signed by your own hand, as regent of France. Tell these

persons, then, that no one else has right to dispose of his life—not even yourself.”

“It is true,” returned the queen. “But what wish you, Perinet?—you are not going to betray me?”

“Far from it, madame; I would but avenge myself.”

“His life is in your power,” exclaimed the queen, “and you can dispose of him as you please. What shall be his destiny?”

The armourer cast a glance of triumph at his fallen enemy, and drew off his own surcoat. He turned to the constable, and showed him the scars of a recent punishment upon his shoulders. Then, in reply to Isabelle, he added, with an exulting smile,

“The common gibbet at Montfauçon.”

“You would not hang me like a dog?” said D’Armagnac feebly.

“You beat me like one, in front of the Châtelet,” returned Perinet. “Ho, there!” he continued; “a horse for Queen Isabelle. It will be a dainty sight to behold the constable of France on the thieves’ gibbet. Sire de Graville, to your charge I commit the traitor. L’Isle Adam, you will take care of the king. And now onward to Montfauçon.”

A roar of exultation broke from the surrounding crowd as Perinet spoke. Indeed, so bitter was the hatred entertained by every follower of the cause of Burgundy against the wily D’Armagnac, that it required all the exertion of authority on the part of Graville to restrain the populace from tearing him to pieces. Clearing the room, however, of the greater part of the throng, who now hastily bent their way in the direction of the gibbet, the queen’s faithful adherent collected a few tried men of his own guard around him, and placing the constable in the midst of them, they left the house, the queen following on horseback, whilst Perinet rode by her side.

The gibbet of Montfauçon, towards which point every step was now turned, was placed on the eminence from which it derived its name, still existing beyond the faubourgs of St. Martin and the Temple. Upon a parallelogram of solid masonry, about fifty feet long by

thirty-five feet broad, were erected sixteen stone columns, supporting long transverse wooden beams, to which the chains of the criminals were attached. A vault built in the centre of the foundation, served as a receptacle for the bodies, as they dried and fell to pieces; and this was closed by a strong door placed at the commencement of a flight of stairs.

The spot where the gibbet stood is now covered with buildings, and forms an industrious locality, but at the period of our legend nothing could be more wild and lonely than its situation. Its presence seemed to have blasted every thing around it for some distance; and the majority of the people regarded it with superstitious dread, rarely approaching its unhallowed precincts, save at the times when it received a new victim. And when the sun had gone down, and his last rays had fallen upon the gaunt pillars that marked its elevation, with the blackened remnants of mortality that hung between them — when twilight stole over the wild and savage waste upon which it was built, and the distant spires of Paris faded in the gloom, the traveller went far out of his way to avoid the gibbet, and shuddered as he heard the wind moan through the dreary pile, like the wailings of those who had expiated their offences upon it, from the common assassin to the great and — in too many cases good — men, whose crumbling bones were scattered on the floor of its enclosure.

The report of D'Armagnac's intended execution spread like wildfire amidst the infuriated mob of soldiers, artisans, and bourgeois, that were assembled in the Rue St. Antoine; and the vast mass immediately rushed onwards, in one voluminous wave of irresistible force towards the Porte du Temple, through the narrow tortuous streets which led to that entrance of the city. So obnoxious had the government of the constable made him to the people at large, as we have before stated, that Graville himself ran no small risk, from the missiles they were every instant hurling at his prisoner, both from the surrounding rioters and from the windows of the houses. On approaching the gate, a temporary check took place, from the inadequacy

of the portal to allow the dense mass to pass ; and many hundreds plunged boldly into the fosse and swam across ; whilst other large bodies hastened round to the Porte St. Martin, collecting in magnitude as they went, like some mighty avalanche. On arriving at the open ground, without the city walls, the crowd rushed onwards with unrestrained impatience towards the elevation ; and innumerable torches cast a vivid glare over the marais, now perfectly obliterated with the throng of visitors.

The main body of the Bourguignian troops still kept in firm order round the queen, who continued in the rear, with Perinet at her side. As they approached the gibbet, it appeared rising from a hill of flame, so numerous were the torch-bearers who now covered Montmartre ; and some of the more daring had climbed the pillars, and were running round upon the beams, like so many demons waiting for their prey. In every direction lights were seen crossing the open country, all tending in the direction of the gibbet ; and by the time Graville and his body of men-at-arms arrived, conducting the prisoner, it was by their exertions alone that he could approach the scaffold.

In the midst of this wild tumult of excitement, the constable was the only one who appeared unmoved. With his arms folded, he maintained one fixed position, occasionally raising his head to throw a glance of contempt at the throng around him. As the group approached the scaffold, Perinet leapt from his horse, and leading the queen's palfrey by the rein, placed it under the protection of Graville, whilst he himself assumed the command of the body of guards that surrounded D'Armagnac.

A roar of impatience burst from the multitude, as they recognised Perinet on the flight of stone steps, cut in the masonry which led to the platform.

"Do you hear that shout?" asked the armourer of D'Armagnac. "You enjoy a strange popularity with the people. They are anxious for you to present yourself before them."

"I care as little for your irony as for your punishment," exclaimed D'Armagnac, speaking for the first time. "If

you think that I shrink from facing them, you are mistaken. Give me place, and I will allow them the wished-for sight."

The armourer ascended the stairs, and D'Armagnac followed him, still preserving the same haughty bearing. As he reached the summit, another tremendous shout of mingled hatred and triumph saluted him, and one or two burning torches were hurled at him by the more athletic of the crowd below.

"Snarl—bay—scream yourselves hoarse, vile curs!" cried the constable. "My voice can still be heard, and I send it forth, terrible and threatening, with a malediction of eternal infamy and ruin upon you. I curse you, Perinet Leclerc, and the vile cause you have espoused."

"People of Paris," exclaimed the armourer, "you shall yourselves be the executioners of the tyrant who has so long oppressed you. Heed not his curses—they will but rise as evidence against him before the Great Tribunal at whose bar he is about to appear. Seize the end of this cord, and await my signal to do justice upon the tyrant."

As he spoke, he threw the end of a line over the cross-beam, and then cast the other extremity to the crowd below, who rushed eagerly forwards to seize it. Taking the noose that terminated it in his hand, he threw it carelessly over the neck and shoulders of the constable.

"Hold!" he continued, as the impatient mob commenced to retreat with the cord. "All is not yet settled between us."

"What fresh insult have you invented?" said D'Armagnac, turning pale with terror and helpless rage.

"We have an old score to balance," returned Perinet, tearing off the constable's doublet, and drawing his poniard.

"You would assassinate me!" cried the constable. "Strike then, I should prefer death even from *your* weapon, rather than the dog's fate you have assigned to me."

"You are mistaken," returned Perinet. "Constable—when you branded me on the Quai du Châtelet, I told you that you also should carry the red cross of Burgundy

and that *I never broke my word*. Receive it, and then commend your soul to our Lady, for your last moment has arrived."

Thus speaking, he thrust the garments of the constable aside, and scored his shoulders with two deep transverse wounds. Then, casting the crimsoned blade from him, he cried aloud, "Death to the traitor!"

The insurgents who had charge of the cord retreated; and in an instant D'Armagnac was suspended in the air. A fearful cry of triumph greeted his execution; and the sounds rang in his ears whilst his life was departing, for the cord was hastily and badly adjusted, and he was some minutes struggling in agony. At length, the hands fell motionless at his side, and a lifeless mass was all that remained of the constable, which kept slowly revolving, as the multitude, in their savage exultation, jerked it up and down.

Perinet waited on the platform until all was over, and then descended to the spot where Isabelle had taken her station.

"Madame," he exclaimed, "all is now finished, and you are the sole ruler of France. I have avenged Bourdon's murder, and my own dishonour. Resume your power, and let the fate of that wretched man warn you from grinding down too harshly a people who are disposed to serve you. Were I ambitious I would ask some grace at your hands; but I have accomplished all I wished, and we part this hour. But, should revolt again disturb our country, (which Heaven avert!) the will of Isabelle de Bavière will be sacredly obeyed by

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